Free Will

A Philosophical Reappraisal

Nicholas Rescher

Second Edition

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Preface

"Freedom of the will is as self-evident and clear as anything we can know."
René Descartes, *Principles,* No. 39

The freedom of an act is not one of its descriptive features such as its duration or its utilization of a certain tool. Rather, what is involved is something very complicated. As regards free will, there actually are two very different questions: (1) What is it—or would it be—to have free will? Just what would a realization of this condition consist in? and (2) Do we humans actually have a free will? Do we indeed possess this capacity to act freely *sometimes*? In this regard free will is akin to mathematical genius—or for that matter to sorcery. It is one thing to grasp how these terms are to be understood and what it is that we commit ourselves to in applying them; and it is something else again to be able to have due warrant for so applying them in particular cases.

The first issue is fairly simple. An intelligent agent exercises free will whenever one of its choices is ultimately under the control of its thought—and especially when control of its choices is exerted deliberately and wholly without intervention by external forces or constraints. The second issue, the prime focus of the present deliberations, is going to involve a rather long and convoluted story.

To reach an appropriate adjudication of the question of free will it is necessary to take account of so many distinctions and to address so many complex and subtle questions that it would not be unreasonable to regard the problem as close to irresolvable. To all easily accessible appearances, the issue looks to be a conundrum emplaced in a puzzle and wrapped inside an enigma.

The issue has so many subtle facets and presents so many complex obstacles to a resolution that one is strongly tempted to see it as rationally intractable—not thereby regarding the questions as meaningless

but rather as too complex for resolution with the resources at our disposal. But such a position would be overly pessimistic.

In dealing with a complex philosophical issue there are two ways of proceeding. One is the essentially foundational way of stipulating fundamentals at the outset and then proceeding inferentially from there on forward. The other is the dialectical way of peeling off layer after layer of complexity to arrive at an ultimately definitive core only at the very end. As the present deliberations will indicate, it is this second, more round-about and patience-demanding process that is appropriate for addressing problems of free agency.

At any rate, the opening motto from Descartes is decidedly problematic. For before deciding the issue of whether or not we humans have free will, we have to determine just exactly what free will actually is—or would be. And this critical preliminary question is an ink-fish that squirts its obscuring darkness across the landscape of this issue.

The whole field is full of puzzles and paradoxes. Suppose, for example, an agent deliberately subordinates his own will to that of another: without any sort of external compulsion or impulse he chooses to obey *X*. And now *X* orders him to do *A*, which he duly proceeds to do. Has he acted freely or not? We would not hesitate to impute freedom—seeing that *X*'s move to action ratifies his policy rather than suspending it as he was (*ex hypothesi*) at liberty to do. In deliberating about free will a whole host of conceptual issues need to be confronted and clarified.

One of the factors that renders the issue of free will of supreme importance is its role in relation to the ethical precept that "Ought implies can"—namely that an agent is morally obligated only where he is free to act, so that the reach of moral obligation never extends beyond the range of free agency and moral approbation or reprehension cannot be ascribed to an agent unless he freely performs an act deserving of this characterization. Given these considerations, it follows that in the absence of free agency, there is no place for moral duty. If we cannot appropriately impute free agency to people, the entire edifice of moral judgment collapses.

Introduction

Historical and Textual Perspectives

Synopsis

(1) Deliberation regarding freedom of the will goes back to Plato in Greek antiquity. (2) And over many centuries it has played an important role in philosophical and especially in theological deliberation. (3) The change of context raises issues of continuity, but there is good reason to consider them as tractable. (4) Problems do, however, arise from the very vastness of "the literature of the subject."

1. Setting the Stage

The problem of free will was put on the agenda of philosophy in Plato's dialogue *Phaedo*, where it was posed in the following classic formulation, Socrates being the speaker:

> I felt very much as I should feel if someone said, 'Socrates does by mind all he does'; and then, in telling the causes of what I am doing should say first that the reason why I sit here now is, that my body consists of bones and sinews, and the bones are hard and have joints between them, and the sinews can be tightened and slackened, surrounding the bones along with flesh and the skin which holds them together; so when the bones are uplifted in their sockets, the sinews slackening and tightening make me able to bend my limbs now, and for this cause I have bent together and sit here; and if next he should give you other such causes of my conversing with you, alleging as causes voices and airs and hearings and a thousand others like that, and neglecting to give the real causes . . . . But by the Dog! these bones and sinews, I think, would have been somewhere near Megara or Boeotia long ago, carried there by an opinion of what is best, if I had not believed it better and more just to submit to any sentence which my city gives than to take to my heels and run. To call all those things the causes is strange indeed. If one should say that unless I had such things, bones and sinews and all the rest I have, I should not

> have been able to do what I thought best, that would indeed be true. But to say that these, and not my choice of the best, are the causes of my doing what I do (and when I act, by mind, too!), would be a very heedless way of speaking.[1]

The focal question is effectively the following: Do people have the power to determine their actions through the choices they make on the basis of deliberations based on their own preferences and wishes, or is what we do always the result of the operation of larger external forces beyond our control?

The issue of the freedom of the will is of paramount importance in philosophy primarily for two reasons. The first is its bearing on the self-image of ourselves and our fellows as rational agents, beings whose actions are, or can be, autonomously determined by making thought-guided choices in a responsible way. The other is its bearing on the correlative issue of the moral—and subsequently legal—responsibility for our actions. Without claiming free will for humans, so it has generally been held, the prospect of viewing ourselves as responsible intelligent agents becomes hopelessly compromised.

The core of the doctrine of free will lies in the idea that *the things that intelligent agents do are sometimes determined and controlled by their thought*: that mind is sometimes in charge of matter and our actions the product of our deliberations. The concept so specified defines *metaphysical* freedom. There is also the cognate idea of *moral* freedom, for which the above-italicized formula replaces "thought" by the more specific "wants and wishes." The bank clerk who opens the safe for robbers under duress is not morally free, although he is (or may possibly be) acting with metaphysical freedom. For metaphysical freedom the agent must be in immediate control, but moral freedom is eliminated by the inaugurating impulsion of another agency. To say that an agent's act is free is, in effect, to say that what he does issues from his own autonomous deliberations and choices, and accordingly is done without undue external manipulation by hypnosis, drugs, or force. The act ensues from the agent's own choice in the matter, with any external influences funneled through his motivational deliberations—irrespective of how these themselves come about. (An action performed under threat is still free in the metaphysical sense of the term, however unfree it is in the moral and/or legal sense of the term.)

The main obstacles to metaphysical free will that have been contemplated in the long history of deliberation on the subject are three: preordained fate, divine foreknowledge, and causal predetermination.

The concept of *eimarmenê* (*moira, fatum, Schicksal, destin*) played a key role in Stoic philosophy and was taken over from Chrysippus by Cicero in his classic tract *De fato*. It was a prime target for St. Augustine and a key object of critical refutation for the church fathers. But eventually the deterministic fatalism at issue ceased to be a live option in European thought until the resurgence of theistic fatalism in Protestant theology.

The most sensible way to handle the divine foreknowledge problem is through the "middle knowledge" theory of the Spanish scholasticists, which pivots the issue on the rational matter in the rational order of facts. The facts are that Caesar (freely) decides to cross the Rubicon, and God foreknows this. But two possibilities are open. Does Caesar so decide because of God's foreknowledge, or does God's foreknowledge consist in realizing what Caesar's free decision will be? By insisting on the second alternative in such cases, the Spanish scholastics kept open the choice to freedom of the will.

As regards the rejection of freedom on grounds of the causal determination of action via physical causality, it should be noted that even if mind and brain—thought and matter—are connected in the closest imaginable coordination, the issue of processual inauguration—of which is the independent and which the dependent variable, so to speak—still remains entirely open.

2. The Theological Background

Historically, the theological background of predetermination via God's foreknowledge provides a salient setting for free will deliberations. The following stages of thought are instructive in this context.

Patristic Developments. With the introduction of Christianity into the mainstream of Western thought, free will came to be studied in more detail. Two teachings of the Christian religion influenced this development. One was that man was created by God and commanded to obey a divine moral law; at the same time, he was promised an eternal reward or punishment. But reward or punishment implies that a man has free choice, for otherwise such sanctions are meaningless. The second was that the first man had incurred original sin and that man, as a result, needed redemption by grace.

Patristic and medieval writers were not so much concerned to prove the existence of free will as they were to establish the roots of freedom, its relation to reason, and its theological implications. St. Ephrem the Syrian, for example, taught that man has freedom; that this freedom is rooted in his intellect and will; and, because of this, that man is the

image of God. Other patristic writers defended free will against the teaching that fate ruled the universe.

Augustine and Anselm. In the early Church St. Augustine was beyond question the greatest exponent of the Christian teaching on human freedom. His major concern was to reconcile man's freedom in relation to contingent acts with the foreknowledge God necessarily possesses. Augustine insisted on the freedom of the human will; yet he insisted on the necessity of grace as a basis of merit. He also asserted that an omnipotent and omniscient God would necessarily know, from all eternity, the infinite number of motives to which the will of each man might consent.

By the time Augustine composed his treatises, the Latin term *libertas* had several meanings in the Christian world. It could mean freedom of the will, or freedom as opposed to slavery. Consequently, when St. Anselm of Canterbury took up a discussion of liberty he distinguished between the power to choose what is good or evil (*arbitrium*) and the power to choose what is actually good for one's nature (*libertas*). For St. Anselm, free choice is not so much an ability to choose between good and evil as it is an ability to maintain rectitude of the will.

Thomistic Doctrine. The Jewish philosopher Saadia Gaon was receptive to the idea of some Islamic theologians that divine justice presupposes the freedom of man's will. Viewing this idea in the context of divine foreknowledge and omnipotence, Maimonides viewed the issue of free will as a mystery that baffles all attempts at human understanding. By contrast, St. Thomas Aquinas reaffirmed the reach of reason. He argued that man is free with respect to finite goods. To reconcile the contingency of human choice with God's foreknowledge, Aquinas emphasized that man is in time whereas God is outside time, and that past, present, and future are simultaneously present to the Divine Mind. Thus *fore*knowledge, while meaningful to man, has no counterpart in God.

Yet God is not only omniscient, He is omnipotent; and in His omnipotent providence He brings into actuality all events that have happened, that are happening, and that will happen in the universe. This raises a problem: if an omniscient and all-provident God also effects whatever happens in the universe, how can God's activity be reconciled with man's freedom?

Later Scholasticism and Protestantism. Among Catholic philosophers and theologians two main positions have been formulated to solve this problem. Both positions claim their origin as further refinements

of the teaching of St. Thomas, and both were developed in answer to the positions of Luther and Calvin.

Dominican and Molinist Theories. Dominican theologians for the most part teach that God premoves each man toward his freely chosen goal, because every act of a creature requires that God first move the creature. This premotion is in conformity with the nature of the creature premoved. Thus, an infinitely powerful God infallibly premoves man, a free agent, to choose a particular goal freely, while premoving other creatures toward their goals with necessity. God's premotion is inevitable in view of his omniscience. Since it is inevitable, it may be called a decree, and in this sense it is logically prior to divine knowledge of creatural activity.

The Molinist position differs from the Dominican chiefly in two respects: instead of referring to a divine premotion, Molinists think it more precise to speak of a divine concurrence with man's will. By his omniscience God foreknows what an agent will freely choose to do.

St. Thomas himself notes that part of the difficulty in resolving the question of God's premotion and of man's free choice lies in the need to use a more apt terminology when speaking about God, since terms can be predicated of God only analogically. In the problem at hand terms such as premotion or foreknowledge are applied to God as if He existed in time, whereas He is an infinite being existing outside of time.

Protestant Reformers. Among the controversies of the Reformation, the doctrine of free will was a crucial point of difference between Protestant and Catholic theologians. Martin Luther and John Calvin strongly denied freedom of the will, basing their arguments on scriptural texts, especially those of St. Paul. Luther concluded that man is predestined to such an extent that he can never truly be said to have power over his own fate. Luther did not deny all human freedom; but he believed that the freedom man possessed after original sin was not enough freedom to allow him to work out his redemption.

Calvin's denial of free will went further than Luther's. He asserted that man cannot perform a good act unless necessitated to it by God's grace, and that man can in no way resist such grace. It is absurd, said Calvin, to speak of man cooperating with grace, because this implies the possibility of rejection on man's part.

3. Later Perspectives

The rise of the mechanical world view from the time of Descartes and Hobbes to that of Laplace encouraged the espousal of a scientific determinism that motivated a widespread rejection of free will. In the

wake of the decline of finalistic thinking that accompanied Darwinism, a scientism of nature became so firmly established that even the dematerialization of matter in the twentieth century could not countervail against the deterministic mechanism of this now prevalent perspective. A whole host of plausible, albeit utterly erroneous, fallacies of thought have nourished the conviction that free will is at odds with modern science.

As the medieval Schoolmen rightly saw, the crux of free agency lies in the issue of free choice (*libertas arbitrii*) rather than in anything relating directly to overt agency as such. In this regard the nature of freedom of the will becomes instructively clarified in John Locke's parable of the man who, unbeknownst to himself, is placed in a locked room. He clearly has:

> *Freedom of choice or decision* (*Wahlfreiheit, libertas arbitrii*) because he is entirely at liberty to decide to stay or to try to leave.

But he clearly lacks:

> *Freedom of action* (*Handlungsfreiheit, libertas actionis*) because irrespective of his wishes and endeavors in the matter he is bound to stay.

It is important in this context to draw a distinction between

- *Elective* (or *minimal* or *performative*) freedom: being in a position to do that which one actually wants to do.

and

- *Selective* (or *maximal* or *optative*) freedom: being in a position to do whatever one may want—to act differently had one so wished.

Locke's case of the man who voluntarily and by his own choice remains in a locked room acts freely in that former sense, but not in the latter, richer sense of the term.

In this context the issue of free decision is significant. Here one is always wholly unfettered. This sort of freedom is maximal: one is in entire control—one could always *decide* differently.

And the same thing holds with what one *tries* to do. I can always *try* to do something else: there is no impediment here. But actual agency is something else again, for one is often in a position of inability to translate thought into action. I can without a hindrance decide to try to raise my hand. But whether I will actually do so will depend on the

action of nerves and muscles, which may prove to be uncooperative. So when I choose quite freely (in the elective sense specified above) to keep my hand at rest, it could be false to say that I could have done otherwise, so freedom in the larger selective sense just is not there.

Full-fledged freedom of the larger sort is thus something rather more demanding.

When thinkers such as the ancient Stoics and Spinoza in their wake cast the free man in the role of someone whose wishes always align with the inevitable, they envision freedom in the former, lesser or performative mode. Precisely because they view the course of events as fixed beyond any prospect of human intervention, they obtain a mode of freedom for us by having our wants along with fate's inexorable dictates. But this is not the larger sort of freedom with which St. Augustine—or indeed most of us—would alone rest satisfied.

"Would the real freedom of will please stand up." Which of these freedoms is to be identified with actual freedom of the will? Our own resolution in the present context aligns with the former, although John Locke himself opted for the second.[2] Some writers hold that it is the combination of the two, namely free choice plus its implementation. In the end it will not really matter as long as one is clear as to how one proposes to use the term and acknowledges the difference at work. And be this as it may, it is freedom of choice and decision that is going to be in the foreground here. What I actually end up doing when I act is largely in the lap of the gods, but I myself certainly control what I *endeavor*, *seek*, or *try* to do. Here, if anywhere, freedom of the will is fully in play.

4. Issues of Continuity

The English philosopher-historian R. G. Collingwood spoke for a plethora of theorists in maintaining that different eras and cultures cannot address the same question. This doctrine—generally called historicism—has it that even where a contention is formulated in the same words, the concepts at work in different culture-contexts are incommensurable. And if this is so, then there can be no perennial philosophical issues, because as the historico-cultural context changes, this change of setting induces a change of subject. Across the boundaries of eras and places there is bound to be conceptual discontinuity.

The problem of free will is a perfect test-case for this position, seeing that to all appearances it has constantly been on the agenda of philosophical concern—alike in Mediterranean antiquity, medieval Islam,

and Christian Europe in the modern world's industrialized societies. Is it or is it not the same problem that has been addressed throughout by all those participants in the discussion? Are not those lawyers who wrangle about responsibility for action in its legal bearing throughout the years addressing the same issue?

No doubt, saying that "the same question" is at issue is far from unproblematic. After all, what a position affirms and favors is determined by what it denies and rejects: its substance emerges via its oppositions. And as regards free will, this target has constantly changed over time. The ancient voluntarists sought to defend the will's freedom against the powers of fate. The medievals defended it in the face of divine omniscience and omnipotence. The moderns feel called upon to defend it against the powers of nature as portrayed in science. The opposition has certainly been a moving target, running from Fate to God to Nature. But nevertheless there is a key element of commonality throughout. For all of these mighty potencies have been viewed as determining the course of events in ways that far outrun the modest reach of our feebler powers as human individuals. Throughout, the salient issue has been of our capacity at least on some occasions to determine the range of our action and the unfolding of our destiny through the active implementation of our beliefs and wishes. So in the final analysis the issue is one and the same throughout—the capacity of humans to determine their actions through their own reflectively deliberated decisions rather than being pawns at the beck and call of some mighty external potency. The core issue is simply this: Is it at least sometimes the case that our own, autonomously formed thoughts are the controllers of our actions?

As with so many of these deep conundrums, the situation is complex. What happens in this matter of the question of "the same issue?" is something of continuity amidst change—sameness in fundamentals upon which an ongoing change of detail is superimposed. Along with the ancients—and everyone else—we have to eat, to sleep, and also to decide among alternatives. And with them as with us these decisions are made sometimes for self-provided reasons and sometimes as the result of causal factors beyond the individual's control. The basic categories under which the issues can be classed are elements of the human condition that are invariant through time and circumstance—and readily recognized as such. To be sure the detail—how the causality of nature works, what sort of undue influence can affect human decisions—all this sort of thing represents mattes of subordinate detail about which

there can be differences of thought in the wake of a changing way of doing things. The issue of personal decision in this regard is much like the issue of bridge-building. What a bridge is is a matter of commonality between the ancient Romans and ourselves, although issues of the planning, design, material provision, and construction of bridges are all matters of historical variation and contextualization. Analogously, this situation of a sameness of fundamentals combined with a variation of detail holds with free will even as it does with bridges.

The very reason for being of many a philosopher's work is generally to take issue with what a predecessor has said and to disagree with it. (It was, after all, to refute the cognitive nihilism of Pyrrhonian scepticism that Descartes labored: it was exactly what those ancients affirmed that Descartes sought to refute.) To deny cognitive continuity across the divides of time and space is to abandon the effort to achieve explanatory understanding.

To be sure, what is here required is an endeavor to understand others on their own terms. But to deny the prospect of doing so is to embark on a slippery slope into a cognitive solipsism that ultimately locks each thinker into his own impenetrable thought-world. It I cannot get at what Aquinas says about free will, then you cannot get at what I say about it either.

And just this phenomenon is, in fact, a vivid counterindication to the historicist idea that every philosopher—and indeed every thinker—is locked into the thought-world of his own contemporaneous culture so that the thinkers of different eras and cultures never actually discuss the same issues, ideas, or questions. For in no era of philosophic history has the free-will problem fallen from view—every era and virtually every important thinker throughout the history of philosophy has addressed the question. And despite the diversity of answers across the whole spectrum of yes-no-maybe-so responses, there has been substantial agreement in keeping the question broadly in line with its original articulation. Notwithstanding the variety of views about the existence and bearing of freedom of the will, there has throughout been an ongoing identity of concern with one such essentially self-same issue, namely that posed in the deliberations of the Platonic Socrates in the *Phaedo* passage cited at the outset—to wit, the comparative role of external agencies versus personal choice in the determination of human actions. The perduring identity of the question at issue mandates the problem of free will as a clear illustration of the identity model of conceptual development. Even those who sought to reject the problem of the will's

freedom as ultimately meaningless have been in substantial agreement with their opponents as regards what the controversy over free will is actually about. The issue of freedom of the will thus affords a vivid and telling illustration of the possibility of a conceptual commonality of philosophical concern across the divide of time and place.

To be sure, while the basic question remains the same, its historical context changes as the issue comes to be approached from different points of departure. Thus, in antiquity the main difficulty for free will was the role of fate; in medieval times, it was the divine foreknowledge of God; and in modern times, it has become causal determination via scientific law. The operation challenge has assumed different guises, but its fundamental target is in essence the same.

4. Problems of "The Literature of the Subject"

It was said of Helen of Troy that she had a beauty that launched a thousand ships. And it can be said, with understatement, that the problem of free will has a fascination which launched a thousand books. Rare indeed is the philosophical problem that has engendered a literature of comparable scope—much of it not particularly helpful:

> While the concept of free will is a favored theme of philosophical deliberation, there nevertheless here enters a one-sidedness, unclarity, and confusion as though a mass of a hundred speakers in a hundred languages were disputing simultaneously, each being absolutely convinced that he alone is altogether clear on the matter and that all the rest are uncomprehending ignoramuses.[3]

Four-fifths of the writing ever done on the topic is the work of the past single generation. And even a casual look at the subject's extensive bibliography will suffice to show that a change of tectonic proportions has evolved over the past two generations. The explosion of the literature has rendered it impossible to do "business as usual." No longer can even the most dedicated of scholars take the literature of the subject into adequate account—not even where one single particular problem-issue is concerned.

Vast though the literature is, a great deal yet remains to be said and done. Thus, it is a surprising fact about the mass of philosophical literature regarding free will that so little attention has been devoted to evolutionary considerations. Given the evolutionary development of mankind's intellect, nothing would seem more natural than to expect that a resource like free will—if actually present in *homo sapiens*—

would be a feature arising in the course of this creature's evolutionary emergence in nature's scheme of things, much like intelligence, language, and aesthetic sensibility. Somehow this rather obviously relevant line of thinking seems to have remained very much on the back burner.

All in all, the issue of free will exhibits in miniature a problem that confronts philosophers in the present era of an explosion in "the literature" of their subject. And in a way this bibliography affords a *reductio ad absurdum* of a certain concept of philosophical mastery—a concept typified by the German *Habilitationschrift*. The traditional idea of such a mega-dissertation was to make contact with the totality of extant work on a given issue or topic. But in the present state of the field—where even a single problem can, like Free Will, be the subject of some 5,000 publications—this objective of "taking an adequate account of the literature" is no longer practicable.

What are individual investigators to do when confronting an unmanageably large literature on the particular problem they have in view? They have little choice but to accept that the literature of the field is a haystack in which many a good insight is an unfindable needle. Perhaps hope can be placed in the idea that the task can be scaled down to dealing with the important work. If one invokes "Rousseau's Law" to the effect that in a field of N publications the subgroup of "truly important publications" can be fixed at $\sqrt{N}$, with N at around 5,000, this amount can be fixed at roughly 70—which is just barely still manageable. However, the problem still remains that different investigators will have very different opinions about which of those many works at issue will fall into this top-priority group. After all, from the standpoint of a concern for this or that particular aspect of the matter the relevancy and significance of publications will be subject to a law of diminishing returns. Only a fraction of the literature will be highly material to any specific concern, and as one goes beyond this, the contextual importance of the items will decay rapidly.

A striking feature of the topic is its inherent contentiousness. One might think that most discussants would favor this seemingly unique feature of *homo sapiens* as the crown of creation. Not so! For every friend to free will there is an equal and opposite foe. It seems that Newton's second law is also in operation in philosophy—every action on such a topic evokes an equal and opposite reaction.

Yet, when confronted with such a vast bibliography, what is one to make of the situation that it represents? It soon becomes all too clear that every book or article favoring free will is matched by one in

opposition—and *vice versa*. If voting on a philosophical issue were to be doctrinally determinative—which fortunately it is not—then the free will controversy (like so many others!) would end in a tie.

But that, of course, just is not how things work in philosophy. Here, as in matters of politics or religion, one cannot look to the Tower of Babel constructed by controversialists to provide answers to one's questions. One can look to it for ideas and material, but in the end one has to make up one's own mind.

Notes

1. Plato, *Phaedo* 98C.
2. Freedom or liberty of the will "is not an idea belonging to volition or preferring [i.e., choice] but to . . . the power of doing or forbearing to do as the mind shall choose or draw." (Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, Book II, Chapter 21, Section 15.)
3. Eduard von Hartmann, *The Phenomenology of Moral Consciousness* (Berlin: C. Duncker, 1879), p. 399.

1

The Nature of Free Will

Synopsis

(1) Freedom of the will requires an agent's consideration of alternative outcomes as well as the absence of thought-external determination of his choices. The question "Could the agent have done otherwise" introduces much complexity into the picture. (2) Conscious choice is not an essential requisite of freedom. (3) Thought-control by the agent is the crucial requisite here so that choice and decision are thus essential to freedom of the will. (4) But motivational freedom is less a matter of doing than of trying, so that deliberations regarding free will do well to focus upon decisions and choices rather than actual performance. (5) Both agent productivity and motivating autonomy are accordingly indispensable to free volition—a circumstance that certainly does not render the idea of free decisions unintelligible. (6) Issues of act and causality invariably go beyond mere issues of will.

1. Requirements of Freedom: Preeminently Deliberation

The *idea* of free will is a thing of human conceptual artifice, and to investigate it profitably one needs to begin by considering what the concept at issue involves and what sense can be made of it. This task occupies much of the book, for only after the conceptual issues are settled can one properly address the question of how things actually stand with respect to freedom of the will. In this regard free will is in pretty much the same boat as free fall. What free fall is—what it takes to count as an instance of free fall—is a conceptual issue. But where free fall actually operates in the world—if and when it does—is up to Mother Nature. And so, before grappling with the question "Should one accept the doctrine of free will as *true*?" it is clearly necessary to resolve the prior question: "Just how are we to understand the contention that people exercise free will in making their choices and decisions? And just how does 'freedom' come into it?"

Aristotle wrote "A staff moves a stone, and is moved by a hand, which is moved by a man."[1] But he might just as well have written "A twig expands a nest, and is moved by a beak, which is moved by a bird." In both cases we have agency, but for authentically *free* agency something more is required: the action must transpire as a consequence of thought. Free will theory envisions humans as having the power to initiate change through thought-guided action, thereby bringing about a state of affairs that would not otherwise exist. It holds that people are to be viewed as goal-motivated agents able to function as prime movers, the initiators of change.

Will in the philosophically relevant sense is the capacity or power of making deliberate choices regarding one's actions, and thereby guiding one's actions by means of thought. And as a first approximation such a will is free when it follows the agent's own wishes rather than being constrained or manipulated. Thus, free will, or *liberty* as he called it, was instructively defined by John Locke as follows:

> The *idea of liberty*, is the idea of a power in any agent to do or forbear any particular action according to the determination or thought of the mind, whereby either of them is preferred to the other.[2]

Accordingly, willing is the use of thought to resolve issues of action directed at bringing one thing or another about. That action can be controlled by thought—that we have a power to act or not to act in line with deliberately made choices—is something that Plato and Aristotle already maintained,[3] although they did not have a term for free will as such. On the basis of this idea, will came to be understood as the capacity of an intelligent agent to choose and decide by way of making a determination pro or con, yea or nay, for or against some way of acting. Its work is to effect a determination one way or the other to intervene deliberately in the course of events with a view to bringing about a projectively imagined result. The singing of a bird is automatic, that of the operatic diva a thought-controlled performance: however habitual it becomes, it remains the free product of thought-controlled action.

The control of outcome through the thought of an agent on the basis of reasons geared to one's own aims and preferences is the core idea of free will. As Thomas Reid put it long ago, an act of will consists in a "determination of the mind to do, or not to do something which we conceive to be in our power."[4] Self-determination through deliberation

has always been seen as the crux of free will, with a choice or decision among alternatives being made freely when the agent at issue resolves the matter on the basis of his deliberations. Many theorists doubt that animals can do this. Indeed, some of them doubt that we humans can, and view our actions as predetermined by the way of the world.

The medievals characterized the will as a *rational* faculty because they thought that it should, ideally, be guided in its resolutions by a concern for the best thing to do in the circumstances. Accordingly, they saw the will as free from a subjection to sensory appetites to do the bidding of reason. Modern thinkers, by contrast, view freedom as a liberty to ignore reason and follow the wind-drift of inclination where it lists. Free will is thus seen as the power to do as one wishes without the restrictive constraint of factors outside one's control. Its pivot lies in an agent's being capable of making choices and decisions through his autonomous deliberations—proceedings whose outcome cannot be fully and adequately accounted for by factors operating outside the agent's thought. Thought control is the crux.

Thus, consider the following explanation chain:

Q: Why did *X* do *A*?

A: Because he decided to do *A*.

Q: Why did *X* decide to do *A*?

A: Because he preferred it to the alternatives.

Q: Why did *X* prefer doing *A* to the alternatives?

A: Because *he thought that* doing *A* had a superior balance of positive over negative consequences.

Note that in that last answer we cannot simply omit the "he thought that": it must be present, at least tacitly. In matters of free decision we cannot bypass the agent's mind. Whenever the action at issue is a free action such an explanation-chain can never go outside the range of the agent's beliefs and desires. No claim of fully adequate explanations can lead outside this agent-correlativity: when we stop mentioning the agent, we cease to maintain explanatory cogency because we lose contact with *his* agency. It lies in the very concept of free agency that an explanatory regress of the above-illustrated kind just cannot afford to let the agent drop from sight. What the doctrine of physicalistic

determinism wants, but cannot readily obtain, is an explanatory sequence from which all factors over which the agent has some control are entirely eliminated—a state of things that would be flat-out incompatible with freedom of the will.

An agent's aspirations are not limited by his capabilities: he can be entirely unrealistic. He can want to—and indeed try to—"leap tall buildings in a single bound." But, of course, accomplishment and performance is something else again. Freedom to will does not entail freedom to act. Free will is not yet free agency: it stops well short.

John took up his bow and arrow, shot at the target, and hit the bull's-eye. Was this act of his ("hitting the bull's-eye with his arrow") a free act or not? We would have to qualify as follows: his "shooting at the bull's-eye" was presumably free (as regards intent, he was in control). But yet the realization of his intended objective through his free act could not really be characterized as free: he was not in control here—even if successful, his shot might just as soon have missed (but, say, for a favorable burst of wind). With free *decisions* the agent is in complete control, but with their outcomes—and thus the actual act performed—the agent need not be in complete control. But with free *actions* there must be an unbroken and seamless *conceptual* (and not merely causal) linkage between decisions, intentions, and outcomes. Agent control is required all along that line. Thus, in serving, the tennis player performs a free act, but that freedom will extend no further than mind control does. With the duffer, the ball may not even cross the net to make for a complete serve. With the expert, control may extend to the details of speed and placement—and free agency extends with it.

Some theorists tie free will too closely to what an agent *can do*. However, one should be cautious here. For even when an agent cannot do something, he can at least *try to do it*. And many can-dos have nothing to do with free agency, because they relate to the passive rather than active side of things. An agent can feel surprised at a news item or dream about sugarplums, but will not, in general, do such things *freely*.

Metaphysical freedom in agency can be clarified by the following illustrations:

- *Acts that we never perform freely* (because we here exercise no control)
  —awaking from sleep
  —forgetting someone's name
  —understanding a word written in a language we know
  —mistaking one person for another

- *Acts we can perform freely but generally don't*
  —blinking our eyes
  —sneezing or yawning
  —mispronouncing words
- *Acts we can only perform freely* (in the metaphysical mode)
  —calculating the square root of a number
  —actually taking an oath
  —writing an original poem
  —opening a combination lock
  —translating hieroglyphics

However, the sample actions that the present discussion characterizes as free are not as yet claimed to be definitively so; rather, the claim should be viewed as presumptive and preliminary, subject to reconfirmation on the basis of fuller consideration. For what is at issue here are steps toward clarifying what is at stake with free action and free will: but whether the phenomena so clarified are actually realized in nature is ultimately going to call for another line of consideration. Those illustrations are intended to contribute to *conceptual* clarification: whether or not they carry *existential* weight is something that will emerge only in the light of subsequent considerations.

The idea of free agency is predicated on the conviction that what people think makes a real and productive difference to what happens in the world. Consider a game of chess. What the free-will-maintaining voluntarist claims is (1) that even someone who knows *everything* about the world's condition antecedent to that game's commencement would not be able to say how that game will actually unfold, and (2) that even during the game itself, knowing everything about the world then-and-there *except* for a player's deliberations would not enable one to determine just how those deliberations will evolve and how that player will make his moves in the light of subsequent developments. That player's as-yet indeterminable decisions will almost certainly make a crucial difference to subsequent developments.

Thomas Aquinas held that "man is the master of his acts because he has deliberate choice with regard to them."[5] And that a volition of the will is the terminus of a course of deliberation—"the last act of our deliberations"—is an idea that goes back at least to Thomas Hobbes.[6] Such volition is something that only intelligent and reason-capable beings can manage since deliberation is a mode of reasoning. And this idea has ancient roots: for Aristotle, will (*boulêsis*) is the form

that appetite (*horexis*) takes in intelligent beings, where it comes to be governed by rational deliberation (*logismos*).[7]

Consciously exercised control over decision-resolutions up to the very point of decision itself is the crux of free will. A fully free action is one that proceeds under the control of thought. I am right-handed and would ordinarily open the door with my right hand. And I do this automatically, without giving the matter much (if indeed *any*) thought. Here my proceeding is certainly not unfree, but nevertheless only quasi-free thanks to the absence of deliberation. Yet, of course, the resulting act—the opening of the door—is a free act, irrespectively of whether the acting that constitutes it is conducted freely or quasi-freely. But if—say to make a point—I deliberately and intentionally depart from my otherwise automatic procedure and open the door with the left hand, then the act at issue (the opening of the door) is not only free as such, but also done freely (and not merely quasi-freely).

On this basis, three requisites are crucial for free volitions:

- the outcome of a choice or decision will depend on the "interior," mind-managed deliberations of an intelligent agent proceeding on the basis of his information and evaluations, so that—
- the outcome of a choice or decision will be decided by what the agent thinks, rather than by something outside his control that simply happens to him, and moreover—
- the outcome of a choice or decision will be determined at the time of that choice or decision and not be rendered a foregone conclusion by matters already resolved at some earlier point in time.

Even the actions of a puppet and the discourse of a ventriloquist dummy can qualify as the products of a free will—but, of course, only that of the operative.

The "immediate deliverances of self-awarenesses" may be few, but they will include not only the Cartesian certitude that I am thinking, but also supplementarily the kind of thinking in which I am engaged: wondering, worrying, deliberating, or the like. With this sort of thing, once I understand what *X*-ing is all about, a question of the format "Am I *X*-ing" can no longer perplex me into wondering if I am actually doing it when actually doing so. We can thus settle the issue of whether we ever actually deliberate by simply proceeding to deliberate about it. But, of course, volitional freedom is not comparably straightforward.

As a thinking being, someone to whom we attribute free will must be a rational (information-processing) agent equipped with certain

special capacities. Deliberation and choice, after all, call for the contemplation of as-yet unrealized possibilities, which, being alternatives, are also such that some are bound to remain unrealized. And this requires imagination, something that goes decidedly beyond a recognition of the actual as such. Moreover, since choice involves some sort of preferential selection or comparative determination, the being at issue must have a capacity for evaluation as well. With free choice, recognition, imagination, and evaluation all come into the picture.

2. Is Conscious Choice Needed?

The will is at bottom a faculty of choice. It comes into operation whenever a selection among alternatives is at issue. Obviously the range of choice is often limited, but even a tethered dog has options. The range of options is generally not of our devising but is thrust upon us by the nature of things. And, of course, the will can be free only in relation to the available options. In general, some options are better than others. The choice between a spanking new Rolls Royce and any one of three decrepit jalopies is not much of a problem. But a free choice does potentially exist whenever there are available options and options are not rendered unavailable by being unattractive. Occasionally there simply are not good options and we have to settle for "the least of the evils," but that does not exclude free will. The reluctant choice of a negatively evaluated option can nevertheless be free.

In principle a free choice can be spontaneous (non-deliberated) and even made subconsciously. The crux of free agency is the factor of autonomous determination by an agent's thought in the absence of any undue agent-external control. Whether that control is exercised deliberately and consciously or subconsciously and without explicit deliberation is ultimately irrelevant for metaphysical freedom—control by subconscious thought is still thought control. In the normal course of things, when someone laughs at a joke, they (standardly) do so freely, despite there being no deliberation or decision. (Note the essential role of mind—if the joke is told in a language the agent does not understand, he is not going to laugh.) Still, the quintessential instance of a free action is that of the person who explicitly and consciously decides to do something in advance and then proceeds, with that decision in mind, to perform the act when the time comes.

Unconsciously or subconsciously performed free action is decidedly possible. When you write your signature, you produce the letters of your name freely, but without giving the matter the slightest thought. And it is the same when you recite a poem: you utter the words freely. But there is no conscious attention to, let alone deliberation about it. Other typical examples of choices made (and actions performed) freely, and yet without any conscious attention or deliberation, might include the following:

- Saying "Hello!" when you answer the telephone.
- Crossing the T when writing "cat."
- Taking the menu from the hostess upon being seated at a restaurant.

A person's day is filled with such spontaneous free actions performed routinely in the absence of any explicit attention or deliberation.

It is simply not the case that free acts must always be done consciously, wittingly, and deliberately. For example, whenever I act out of a deliberately developed habit—for example, brushing my teeth in the morning—I act freely to all intents and purposes. On the other hand, when I sneeze or yawn or have a facial tic, I exhibit behavior that does not constitute free action since thought processes are not in control—either consciously or unconsciously.

After all, there must be such subconscious free choice if there are to be any free choices at all. Consider some paradigm case of willing and deliberate choice. If that choice is to be the result of a process of deliberation—of considering and weighing reasons pro and con—then the reasonings indeed must, like all reasonings, be based on accepted premises. But *the willing acceptance of a premise* is itself an act of sorts, and in the circumstances one that is free. And in this case we would now be embarked on a vitiating regress of prior deliberated acceptance.

Regarded in this perspective, the issue of free will turns on a sequence of three questions. Does the outcome of the agent's choice-resolution indispensably depend upon:

- the agent's *thought*?
- the agent's *conscious thought*?
- the agent's *deliberation*?

If the answer to the first question is No, then metaphysical free will is not in prospect. If the outcomes of an agent's choices are determined entirely by factors outside his thought-processes, then freedom of the

will is out of the picture. However, when the answer is Yes, there are, overall, three levels of free will, depending on the following overall answer profile:

(1)	Yes	No	No
(2)	Yes	Yes	No
(3)	Yes	Yes	Yes

Accordingly, there are three levels or modes of metaphysical freedom: type 1 (minimal), type 2 (intermediate), and type 3 (maximal). It is the third mode—deliberative level 3 freedom—that usually stands in the forefront in these discussions. This is because clearly, consciously deliberated decisions are the most salient, the most striking, and the most dramatic instances of free will at work. But they are not the only ones! For freedom of action does not require conscious deliberation. And even moral freedom—and thereby moral responsibility as well—can be in prospect even in the absence of conscious deliberation.

With the preceding deliberations in view, the following specifications are in order:

- *Free choice* consists in an agent's effecting a selection among alternatives without undue external intervention or impulsion.
- *Free decision* consists in an agent's making a free choice on the basis of an explicit consideration of alternative options.
- *Free action* is action resulting from a freely deliberated choice among alternatives.

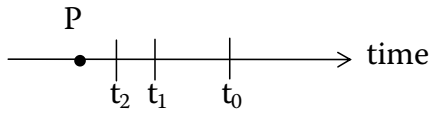
And in each of these cases the freedom at issue will also be of the specifically moral (rather than merely "metaphysical") mode since the outcome issues from the agent's own, autonomously formed motivations.[8] For here, with the moral dimension, the issue of motivation comes into the picture, and the question now arises of whether and to what extent the agent's own autonomously formed motives (aims, objectives, purposes) figure in shaping the outcome of his choice. (Autonomy of motivation is generally acknowledged as a default position that is taken to obtain in the absence of specific counterevidence.[9])

Our will has two modes of operation: the active and the passive. In its active mode, the will calls for a change of activity—it has us do something to change the current course of things. When you are sitting and an "act of will" has you stand up, you decide to change

the status quo and endeavor to do so—and if all goes well, you actually succeed. In its passive mode, the will exerts inertia—it has you carry on with what you are doing. You are sitting and simply keep it up. No special decision and no special effort are called for. You will idle in neutral, so to speak. In effect, the will simply ratifies the status quo. What you do is done willingly, but only in the sense of its not being unwilling—not being contrary to your will. In this sense, however, what you do is altogether free. (Of course, if you are "drunk as a lord" and could not move if you wanted to, your continued sitting becomes unfree.)

Would volitional freedom become impossible if—subconscious thought acknowledged—it were the case that all of our deliberative thinking had to be the product of prior deliberations? If this were always so, would it not create a vicious infinite temporal regress?

No—not at all. Consider the following situation:



And let it be assumed that the thought-situation at t_0 is determined by the thought-situation at t_1 (halfway between t_0 and P), with the thought-situation at t_1 determined by that at t_2 (halfway between t_1 and P), and so on *ad infinitum*. There is no vitiating regressive absurdity here, but only the origination of an integral, albeit inherently, infinite thought-chain arising at P. The fact that that infinite regress has a temporal limit removes the regressive anomaly no less with respect to thought than with respect to motion.[10]

The regressive temporal compression at work here reconciles the Principle of Causality (which states that every event is the causal result of the situation prevailing at a prior time) with the inauguration of a causal chain at some particular time leading to eventuations unforeseeable in the long term.

It must, however, be acknowledged and indeed emphasized that the here-envisioned thought-compression calls for an eventual descent into thought process below the radar-screen of explicit conscious awareness. But as is clear for many other lines of consideration, that is a perfectly practicable prospect, it being nowise necessary that the resolutions of a free will should always be effected consciously.

The definitive questions for free agency stand as follows:

- *Did the agent actually do it*? (For example: Did his hand go up because he himself raised it in the standard way, or did a puppeteer pull it up with invisible strings?)
- *Did he do it because he wanted to?* (Or was it with disconnection from his actual wants through agent-external interaction such as hypnosis, brain washing, *force majeure*, or other such want-sidelining mechanisms?)
- *Did the agent's wanting arise internally, autonomously, from his own agenda?* (Or were his wants the product of undue influence—threats, external pressures, or the like?)

However, two oft-introduced considerations are actually not essential to freedom:

- *Conscious deliberation and decision*. This is not of the essence for freedom. There are many things one does freely without giving the matter much thought: brushing one's teeth, greeting one's neighbors, starting one's car. All these are things one does routinely—and freely—without explicit deliberation. With freedom, issue-resolving explicitness comes in only through its meditative bearing on the fundamental question: Did the agent do it because he wanted to? After all, the resolutions that issue from our explicit deliberations can serve as evidential indications of our wants.
- *Alternativeness*. The issue of whether the agent could have acted otherwise also is not of the essence for freedom. For example, consider such cases as that of the man who freely decided not to keep an appointment with someone who (unbeknownst to him) had long ago left the area. The issue of available alternatives is relevant only because the removal of alternatives often comes about as the product of external manipulation.

3. Issues of "Could Have Done Otherwise"

The issue of "could have done otherwise" leads the discussion into muddy waters. Thus, when I decide an issue by tossing a coin it is certainly true that "I could have done otherwise." But the freedom does not rest in the toss-outcome contingency that all too clearly validates this claim but rather in my initial adoption of that plan of outcome-determination.

In the first analysis, a free action is one that is performed in line with one's own volition. But here, too, there are problems:

> I am reading a book, a real page turner—a book that I simply can't put down—I read on and on with page 310 followed by page 311 followed by 312. And to all visible appearances I am reading page 312 of my own free will. But I have never even given any thought to this matter as such (continuing past page 311 to read also page 312). It is something I never overtly and explicitly *decided* to do: I just went and did it. Of course I could have stopped—if I had wanted to. But a non-wanting does not transmute into a wanting.

Implementing of a free decision is the quintessential mode of free agency. But is it not thereby the only kind. So what should one make of this situation?

The best way to fit it into the accustomed framework is to accept the idea of a subconscious mode of deliberation and decision. One would then regard my turning the page as indicating that I subconsciously decided to read on. The "decision" at issue was not overt, explicit, or witting—as orthodox decisions always are. It was, rather, a tacit quasi-decision, made without attention: subconsciously hidden away, encompassed in my very act of page-turning.

In operating a belief-desire model of act-motivation one is well advised to introduce a level of subconscious thought that allows both for subconsciously held beliefs and desires and, accordingly, also for subconsciously made decisions.

A person can do what he does freely even where "he could not act otherwise." This is clearly shown by John Locke's example of the man who freely stays in a room which—unbeknownst to him—is locked. What he does—staying put—is something he *has* to do and could not alter, but nevertheless he does so freely, because those preferences, choices, decisions are all in smooth alignment with that which, in fact, he cannot but do. His choice was free, but not his action.

A salient aspect of Locke's locked room example is the distinction between

- *objective freedom of agency*, where the agent is actually in a position to determine the outcome of his choices through his choosing.
- *subjective freedom of agency*, where the agent merely thinks (perhaps erroneously) that he is in a position to determine the outcome of his choices through his choosing, but where the actual outcome may actually depend entirely on factors beyond the agent's control.

Subjective freedom could well also be termed freedom of choice. And where the act at issue is simply that of choosing, the agent is always

objectively free in the metaphysical sense and there is no room for implementing the distinction at issue. (All the same, the choice in question, while metaphysically free, may well not be free in the moral sense of the term because that choice may be made under the pressure of untoward influences.)

Consider the theses that, whenever *X* does *A* freely, then he:

(A) could have acted differently.
(B) could have acted differently, if he had so chosen.
(C) could have chosen to act differently.
(D) could have tried to act differently.

Versions (A) and (B) are simply false, as is shown by John Locke's locked room example. However, versions (C) and (D) are clearly and unproblematically true. The crucial difference lies in the circumstance that (A) and (B), with their focus on action, relate to objective occurrences in the world, while (C) and (D) relate to what transpires in the agent's mind. It is clearly just here—in the internal forum of his thought—that the agent is (normally) in control. And just this—control—is essential to freedom of the will. One must accordingly distinguish between a *freedom of acquiescence* and a *freedom of control* where that "could have done otherwise" locution becomes operative. The former has every bit as much claim on the characterization of "free agency" as the latter. But, of course, in the specific context of the freedom versus determinism controversy, it will be the latter that is at issue. (Even Spinoza, that arch-determinist, was prepared to extol the virtues of freedom of acquiescence.)

What is pivotal for free will is thus not that there *are* alternative possibilities for the choice or decision made by the agent but that the agent *thinks there are*. This suffices for *subjectively* free will, although for *objective* freedom these alternatives must actually be available to the agent—in the manner of the counterfactual. "If the agent had opted for this alternative, he could possibly have realized it." This situation means that an agent's choice may be either practicable (reality-accordant) or impracticable (reality-discordant). And the alternatives selected may either be actually available or merely apparent or illusory ("phantom") options. But the *actual* choice of an *illusory* option still remains actual: it represents the correct answer to "What is it that the agent really decides/chooses to do?" Whether that choice or decision can be *implemented* is something different from and additional to the question of whether the agent actually made that choice or decision

freely. What is crucial for matters of free choice or decision is what the agent thinks in resolving choices.

And freedom is not simply a matter of the ability to do whatever one might like to do. I am not rendered unfree by the inability to run a minute mile. Instead, freedom is a matter of an ability to do what one *realistically* wants (can reasonably be expected to realize), and in doing so, proceeding without undue influence from without. (In leaving the room as I wanted to do, I nevertheless did not act freely if you pushed me out bodily.)

Precisely because freedom requires agent-control, it becomes likely that no one will be in a better postion to predict an agent's free actions then the agent himself. And, of course, such prediction may well be conditional and even probabilistic rather than categorical: I can't predict my taking an umbrella two weeks hence, but I can predict that if the weather looks threatening I very likely will. But even where my prediction is categorical, the principle of a change of mind can never be precluded. And even when my predictions are based on my interactions ("I'm going to be at sea on Thursday because I'm starting a Caribbean Cruise on Tuesday"), the prospect of up-to-the-end revisability can never be understood with free action. For revisability is a key aspect of control, and revisability in the light of new information ("They are concerned over a bomb-threat for the shop") is an aspect of freedom. Even rock-solid habit can fall by the wayside under the impact of new developments.

One often hears it said that an agent acts of his own free will only if he could have acted differently. But this idea of "could have done otherwise" poses problems. For one thing (as already noted), the agent who chooses to stay in a room when (unbeknownst to him) all exits are barred still acts freely in remaining there despite the fact that he could not do otherwise in the circumstances. He exhibits freedom not in that he could have *acted* otherwise, but in that he could have *chosen* otherwise.

For another thing, the idea of "could have acted otherwise" always comes with an IF attached, followed by an expression on the order of

- he had chosen to
- he had wanted to
- he had been minded to
- he had preferred to

and possibly even

- he had been <asked, invited, challenged> to
- he had been <bribed, commanded, instructed> to

But note the contrast here. The first group links the issues to internal (autonomous) motivation; the second to external (heteronomous) motivation. In neither case is the agent's *metaphysical* freedom being compromised, but in the second one there already begins to be some element of compromise to *moral* freedom in that the agent is now proceeding under the pressure of an "external" influence.

In practice, freedom is a default position that obtains in the absence of determinable obstacles. When one talks with someone in English (rather than some other language that one knows), one resolves the language-choice freely (in most instances) without giving the matter any thought. The action is spontaneous, automatic, and undeliberated, but the choice made is nevertheless made freely. And moral freedom is not blocked by the circumstance that agents do not (in general) choose their own aims and inclinations. For one's motivations are generally no more optional than one's blood-type or DNA. They are, on the whole, neither matters of choice nor matters of external imposition or manipulation, but simply facets of what one is.[11]

The subsequent discussion will often offer contrast illustrations between free and unfree acts, saying such things as that I act freely when I twiddle my fingers for the sake of an example but not when I do so post-hypnotically, or that I speak the words freely in ordinary conversation but not when reading a poem as a school exercise. But the reader should be notified that the freedom attribution for such illustrative acts makes no final and definitive claims to absolute freedom. For the time being, such examples should be seen as provisional and their bearing as *prima facie*. They relate to what looks to be so in the first instance and not necessarily in the final analysis. Whether things can be sustained in the first analysis awaits the results of subsequent considerations and further deliberation.

Consider something as simple as producing a kick with my right leg while sitting at the edge of a table. I can make this happen in different ways. For one, by simply doing it. For another, by taking in hand a physician's rubber-tipped mallet and thumping my knee in the appropriate spot. In both cases I have freely made a kick with my right knee. But what I have actually done cries out to be described more fully and adequately. For in the one case I have kicked my right leg. (Full stop.) While in the second case I have made my leg kick up with a mallet blow

to the knee. Neither description of what has happened fits the other case. I have, in fact, done rather different things to produce the same result. And the things I have done—and done freely—in the two cases have to be described differently: as a knee kick in the one case and a mallet blow in the other. In the second case I have freely produced a knee kick, but it would not be correct to say that I have freely kicked my leg. That leg action was emphatically unfree.

The present view of deliberation departs from the ancient but somewhat tendentious view of the Aristotelian tradition, which saw a clearer separation of "the intellect," which analyzes and evaluates alternatives, and "the will," which effects the choice among them. Such a faculty-psychology perspective sharply separates deliberating from deciding. Instead, we see deliberation as the overall process of analyzing and weighing the alternative, thereby producing a decision—a choice among them. This takes a unitary view of intellectual process different from the departmentalized view of an earlier age.

In a more contemporary perspective, the question is cast in less issue-begging language as an inquiry whether thought can exert a causality in relation to human acts for which the manifold of extramental occurrence does not otherwise provide. The question then simply becomes whether we human agents actually are (at least sometimes) the self-sufficient authors and institutors of our actions and choices, or whether these are somehow produced by the law-governed operations of impersonal nature in which the beliefs and preferences of an agent play no determinative role—if only because their ultimate causal origin can be traced back completely and entirely to events occurring before the agent's existence.

Free will need not necessarily apply only to action. "John could have been sheriff—the office was his for the taking." It is thus by his own free will that John is not sheriff. But not being sheriff is certainly not an action, though in the existing condition it is, by hypothesis, the result of John's free will.

I can threaten you: "You had better decide to do *A*, or else." I can influence and even *force* your decision. But I cannot *make* it. Deciding, like eating, is the sort of thing one must do for oneself. And ideally one should do so on one's own terms. The overall process of alternative-resolving judgment formation—conscious and subconscious aspects included—is what we here term *deliberation*. It affords the means by which alternatives get resolved in thought where matters of decision and choice are at issue.

But how do people go about resolving alternatives—make their choices and decisions? Either by personal judgment or by delegation to others—be they processes or devices such as randomizers. (Even this latter involves some judgment, namely that such delegation is appropriate.) And personal judgment proceeds either by discursive pro-con appraisal ("calculation," cost-benefit analysis) or by the elemental deliberation of snap judgment (instinct, "gut feeling"). After all, personal judgment cannot *always* be discursive: at some point snap judgment is called for, because deliberative calculation cannot be carried through *ad infinitum*. Moreover, personal judgment can involve both conscious (overt and explicit) and unconscious (covert and tacit) considerations. In the present context, "deliberation" should thus be understood in a rather broad and comprehensive way.

Is free agency a prospect only for individuals or is it also a prospect for groups? It would seem that just as there can be collectively shared beliefs, collectively shared intentions, and collectively collaborative acts, so also is there the prospect of collectively free acts. Examples of this possibility would be afforded by a trial jury, or the Federal Reserve Board, or the British Cabinet. All of these groups can be, and indeed are expected to exercise freedom in their deliberative actions.

The issue confronts us with two cardinal questions:

- Can collectivities make a decision?
- Can they do so on the basis of deliberative thought?

Clearly in the case of collectively constituted decision makers such as juries or boards of judges (e.g., for a skating contest) or selection committees (e.g., for filling a university presidency) or deliberative assemblies (such as a legislature) or governing bodies (like the Lords of the Admiralty) the answers to these questions can—and indeed should—be an affirmative. In the end, freedom of decision is a certain sort of thing—the capacity to make decisions on the basis of reasons. And it seems clear and incontestable that this sort of thing can be done not only by individuals but also by duly constituted collectivities.

But at this point a complication arises. For while there is little question but that groups can exercise metaphysically (i.e., productively) free agency, they cannot manifest morally free agency. Indeed as groups they cannot manifest moral agency of any sort. For only individuals can act with moral freedom, and moral standing cannot be delegated. When individuals act as part of a group, their moral agency is inalienable: all

members act for their own individual motives and the relevant moral standing remains with them. If *X* endorses committee action for good motives and *Y* for bad, then that's the end of it: as far as moral considerations are concerned, it is "every man for himself." Morally each member of the group stands on his own footing. People can share productive responsibility with others—or can offload it onto them altogether—but moral responsibility stays in place.

Suppose *X*, *Y*, and *Z* to be partners in crime who agree to decide matters by majority rule. They decide to kidnap someone. *Z* is opposed but goes along as a member in good standing of the group. When the ransom is not paid, they decide to kill their hostage. (*X* is opposed but is forced by his partners to go along.) As far as a metaphysical (i.e., productive) free agency goes, the group as a whole carries out both the kidnapping and the murder. But as far as regards *moral* free agency, only *X* and *Y* have acted freely in relation to the murder, but *Z*, who neither acquiesced nor "went along," is not a free agent in this regard.

4. Free Will Requires the Absence of Thought-External Determination Over Choices and Decisions

Suppose that someone dropped a vase on the floor, where it broke into bits. Why did she do this? This is certainly something that could be explained in rather different ways:

- She hated seeing the thing about the house.
- She resented it because it had been given to her by a faithless former admirer.
- She was carrying it but had a sudden painful muscle spasm in her arm.

Three decidedly different sorts of explanation are thus available here. The first is an explanation by *reasons*. It envisions answering the question "What reason/ground/purpose did you, the agent, have for what you did?"—the answer here calls for a first-person account presenting matters from the agent's point of view. The second explanation proceeds by *motives*. The fact on which it pivots may never figure explicitly in the agent's conscious awareness—it may well never actually "enter her mind": the answer is given from a third-person, bystander point of view. (However, once a motive is actually acknowledged by the agent it can immediately be retrospectively recharacterized as a reason, through being internalized

into the first person.) The third explanation, by contrast, proceeds in terms of natural *causes* disconnected from the agent's thought. Here the agent's thoughts, beliefs, and motives—conscious or not—will not enter in at all. For this very reason free agency is out of the picture here. The fully adequate explanation of a free action cannot proceed in this third mode alone, precisely because agent-determination by thought is of the essence wherever free volition is at stake. Thought control by the agent is of the essence.

To maintain that we humans are equipped with a free will is to claim for us a certain particular sort of ability: the capacity to make choices and decisions through deliberative thought based on our own motivation, without the outcome-determinative intrusion of factors and processes whose operations are wholly beyond our personal control. The principal point of such a position is that our actions issue from our choices and decisions, which themselves are *productively made by us* rather than being *causally made for us* by processes lying outside of our control. As Henri Bergson stressed, choice is bound up with our sense of reality's contingent futurity, since in making a choice we endeavor to bring to realization one sort of future rather than another.[12] Our own thinking must be in charge here, and this means (among other things) that if our deliberatively formed choices and decisions had eventuated differently, then our endeavor to implement them would have been correspondingly different.

When a decision is made freely, the agent is productively responsible for it, and responsibility can be an unwelcome burden. The gravity of a decision is determined by the importance and magnitude of what is at stake. And here we can encounter what is often referred to as "the agony of decision" where the stakes are great and one's confidence in the correctness of resolution small. Freedom of choice and decision is not always a thing of unalloyed positivity.

In matters of decision and choice, due deliberation not only is procedurally possible but will be morally mandatory when important issues are involved. Suppose I have to make a decision in which someone's welfare is at risk. Shall I do it or not? And suppose that I resolve this choice by delegating it to a random device, say, a die: come 1–5, I'll help; come 6, I'll not. This selective delegation would be a grave act of dereliction because this is the sort of matter I should properly decide by conscientious deliberation. It frivolously treats as rationally indifferent—though not, to be sure, probabilistically indifferent—something that by rights must be treated in a serious and responsible way.

It degrades the dignity with which humans and their interests should be addressed by their fellows. Due deliberation can thus be a duty as well as a method.

With authentic freedom, the matter of motivation becomes crucial. The ancient term *autexousía*—which in earlier Greek meant "absolute power" and subsequently indicated the self-determination at issue with manumission from slavery—was used by the Church Fathers to stand for the sort of autonomy characteristic of free will: the power of self-determination. Just as in politics coercion and force are the prime impediment to freedom, so in personal agency external manipulation and undue influence are its prime impediment. With free will the only viable sort of constraint upon someone's decisions with choice are those impressed by the agent's thoughts and deliberations in the process of deciding: any sort of thought-external constraint or compulsion in an agent's choices and decisions is antithetical to free will.

However, while doing something freely certainly requires thought, it need not necessarily involve a great deal of it. When someone acts "on impulse" or "in a fit of rage," she loses self-control, but only in the limited sense of control by her usual and customary self. Yet even impulsion by one's "lower self" is not yet *external* manipulation and leaves the agent still in charge—and responsibly so, seeing that rage is not yet quite the outright madness that fully defeats responsibility.

Our freedom as rational agents is limited by the realization of the pervasiveness of foreclosed options—the myriad of things that the stern realities of Nature put beyond the reach of achievability for us, and experience—that greatest of instructors!—soon teaches us about the limits of our capabilities. Clearly many things are beyond our capacities. The power of mind over matter is limited—we cannot choose to stay sober upon drinking, to avert seasickness when storm-tossed, or to remain calm when endangered. But our control over what we *try* to do is larger, and our control over what we would *wish* to do larger yet. We cannot by free will avert being suffused with anger when gratuitously insulted. But nothing can stop us from regretting that this is so, wishing it were otherwise and trying to make it so. Outcomes with respect to actual results may be beyond us, but outcomes with respect to effort certainly are not.

Short of verging on insanity, we can only *decide* to do that which we believe to be possible for us. In actual practice we standardly grant our interagents the benefit of a (defeasible) presumption that they are sane, and a sane person will generally only try to do that which he believes to be possible. So we accept the inference from "He decided

to do *A*" to "He deemed the doing of *A* to be an available and achievable option for himself." (Of course, one may well be wrong about this sort of thing.)

Matters of decision lie in the eye of the beholder. Thus, suppose that someone believes there are three museums in town that are respectively having exhibits *X*, *Y*, and *Z,* which she is eager to see. But, of course, she may be mistaken about this. The first museum may be closed for repairs, the second have changed its exhibit to *W*, and a new museum opened with exhibit *U*. Instead of *X*, *Y*, *Z* the actual choice is *U*, *W, Z*. Accordingly, the actual range of choice may well differ from the agent's putative one. But—and this is the important point—the choices and decisions an agent actually makes will and must be made with respect to the situation as he sees it.

But what if I *mistakenly* believe that doing something is possible for me when this is not the case. Then there comes a parting of the ways as between first-person and third-person characterization. For I will then say "I decided to do *A*." But you who know better—who realize that doing *A* is impossible for me—will have to characterize the situation by saying "He decided *to try to* do *A*." For that qualification about trying would commit you to the (rejected) idea that doing *A* is something that is possible for me. All this is a feature of the communicative ground rules governing the terminology at issue.

However, from a third-party observer's standpoint, phantom options require caution. We ourselves do not want to be saddled with the agent's misconceptions. The agent may *think* he can move mountains by sheer willpower, but I cannot say flatly that he decided to do so. I have to say he *tried* to do so. Thus, when an option is unavailable—or, even worse, actually impossible—we facilitate the matter with qualified custom. We would not say "He decided to square the circle" but rather would say "He decided to try to square the circle." I can say unproblematically "He decided to try to square the circle." But I will run into difficulty in saying "He decided to square the circle"—a difficulty for which I can extract myself only by substituting "He decided *to try to* square the circle." Otherwise I undertake on my own account a commitment to this agent's rather problematic view of things. But this caution on our part does not alter the facts. With freedom of the will the first and fundamental issue is whether the decision was freely made by the agent (a subjective matter) and not whether or not he was actually in a position to implement it (a further and objective issue).

More than merely productive freedom is at issue when questions of responsibility arise. Suppose that *X* fires a shot into a crowd and kills *Y*. It was certainly not his specific intent to kill *Y*. It may actually not have been his intent even to harm anyone: his intent—all he was trying to do—may simply have been "to put the fear of God into them." But *X* is certainly morally responsible for *Y*'s death, and it is not all that far-fetched to say that *X* killed *Y* of his free will even though *X*'s killing *Y* was inadvertent and without specific intention. For what *X* ended up doing was so intimately involucrate in what *X* willingly and intentionally did that he cannot be relieved of moral responsibility for it.

Free agency is a matter of a capacity deliberately to initiate and engender changes in nature: to bring about a state of affairs that could well otherwise not exist. But just what is the agent in control of? For acting can be ambiguous. One self-same piece of behavior can answer to many descriptions and thereby constitute a wide variety of acts. For example, in raising his hand on a given occasion, someone may do any of the following:

- give a signal to a person across the room
- make a bid at an auction
- tap a passerby's shoulder
- relieve a painful twinge in his arm

This renders actions multivalent in such a way that even freely performed actions can be performed unintentionally, by accident or inadvertence. (If someone has baked arsenic into the cake, then I may poison you in giving you—quite innocently—a piece of it!) But choices and decisions cannot be accidental or inadvertent. For this reason any study of freedom of the will does well to focus on decisions and choices rather than actions.

An intelligent agent lives in two worlds—the real world of actual occurrence and the thought world of his beliefs, values, wishes, and decisions. What such an agent thinks to be so is not necessarily what is so, and what is so does not settle what he thinks to be so. In particular, the alternatives that he thinks lie before him, may or may not be those there actually are. But it is nevertheless the former that are decisive for his deliberations and decisions. (His *actions* are another matter.)

5. Free Action and Agent Production

An agent is pretty well at liberty to decide what he will try and endeavor to do. What is the case in the real (objective thought-independent)

world and what actual result will ultimately ensue from his endeavors is not up to him. But deciding what he will *try* or *endeavor* to do is entirely his call. That decision is determined by his thoughts—by his deliberations, beliefs, and evaluations. Its adequate explanation cannot bypass his thought.

Just as *is* does not determine *ought*, so the realities do not determine effort—that is, what we endeavor to bring to realization. Decisions and choices about this are entirely up to us. (Of course, if we become too unrealistic about it, we are foolish—or mad.) What an agent believes—and moreover what he decides upon and tries to bring to realization—may be quite different from what is actually the case and is nowise constrained by it. In its decisions the will is determined by thought, but it is not determined by fact. This is decisively illustrated by John Locke's story. Freedom of the will is one thing and freedom of action another.

Free *agency* thus calls for more than free *volition*. For an act is free only when an agent freely decides or chooses to perform it *and furthermore is able to implement this option in practice*. Free decision is the paramount and definitively crucial feature of free agency. And so the study of freedom of the will does well to fuse choice and decision rather than free agency as such.

Because decision is, by definition, something over whose performance I have control—something that lies within the reach of my power to perform or not as I please—it will hold, essentially by definition, that where something is characterized as a free act of mine it will be appropriate to say that I could have done otherwise. The outcome of my free *choices and decisions* will effectively, by definition, be such that I would have resolved the matter otherwise—that not only were alternatives available to me but that it lay within my power to realize them. For this reason deliberations regarding free volition require a focus on decisions rather than action.

When treating of matters of choice and decision one has to maintain a distinction between the subjective and the objective points of view. There is a decided difference between what an agent is free to choose and what he is free to do—and the former generally affords a much wider range.

Agent control of *outcomes* is not essential to free agency. For one thing, there is John Locke's man who freely remains in a locked room. But also consider the following:

> An agent can act freely to make something happen which nevertheless he could not possibly prevent. (For example, in giving you an item of

information that you already have from another source, I freely bring it about that you have—albeit not *learn*—this information.)

Moreover, an agent can act freely to prevent something from happening that actually could not possibly happen. (For example, by draining the fuel from an automobile whose starter mechanism has been disconnected, the agent freely brings it about that that car will not run.)

The lesson here is that free agency pivots on what the agent *tries* to do and is not a matter of successful outcomes, which may well be beyond the agent's control.

Subjective freedom, which hinges on the agent's own motivational point of view, is the crux of free will. Objective freedom actually to determine outcomes in the world represents an additional "bonus" issue that goes beyond what the agent actually controls. Only insofar as the world is cooperative does freedom of the *will* move on into free *agency*.

The issue of free will and free action is clouded by this gap between what people try to do and what they actually achieve in consequence thereof—something that is in large measure altogether beyond their control.

I agree to take your parcel to the post office. In fact, it contains a bomb and explodes en route. What I did had the effect of killing me. But nothing was further from my mind than suicide. All that I did freely was to carry the parcel toward its intended destination. What was going on, in fact, is substantially irrelevant. My free agency was directed toward what *I thought* was going on. Free agency lies substantially in the mind of the agent: its crux is not what he in fact produces but what transpires in the realm of thought and interaction.

6. Causality Issues

If the lump of sugar I freely put into your afternoon tea is (unbeknownst to me) actually laced with arsenic, I am, in fact, poisoning you. But I only freely sweetened your tea and do not freely poison you, even though in doing the former I actually do the latter. The disconnect is not out there in "the real world," it is there only in my mind and thought. Yet, for the present purposes, it is absolutely crucial.

And this means that what is actually pivotal here is rather "intentional production" than what would strictly speaking be "agent causation."

Suppose that Smith moved a rock with a stick, so that we have the sequence:

(1) Smith's thought—his mind-process—moved his arm muscles.
(2) Smith's arm muscles moved his arm.
(3) Smith's arm moved the stick.
(4) The stick moved the rock.

If the outcome of Smith's act (the rock's movement) is to be explained fully and adequately, this will require being traced back all the way to (1); stopping at (2) will not do the job. No adequate explanation of the agent's free action is possible that fails to make mention of his thought processes (be they fully conscious or merely subconscious). As long as the agent's action is operated via his thought it must be accounted as metaphysically free.

Consider the following narrative: "*The latch released its hold. A spring applied pressure against the door. The door swung wide on its hinges*." No agent is mentioned here. This sort of thing can provide an account of "the door opened." But it will yield no account of "Somebody deliberately opened the door" because no one is *doing* anything. It describes *what* happened alright, but in leaving agency aside it also leaves the explanation of it mysterious. It could all be a matter of impersonal forces of nature. In such cases the sort of occurrence at issue—the door's being opened by someone rather than opening as the result of a natural occurrence such as a gust of wind—cannot even be specified without bringing personal agents into it. By contrast, any event whose occurrence-explanation ineliminably involves the choices and decisions of intelligent agents is thereby a product of free will.

Thomas Reid wrote:

> An event uncaused is an absurdity. The question that remains is whether a volition, undetermined by motives, is an event uncaused. To say so is to deny that the cause of the volition is the one who willed it.[13]

This stance accommodates the *Principle of Causality*—free volitions do have a cause, the agent. But it does not as yet address the Principle of *Sufficient Reason*, seeing that the question remains of why the agent acted—that is, decided—as he did.

The language of natural causality ("His arm moved. It struck the lamp. The lamp fell.") and the language of agent causality ("He pushed the lamp over with his arm.") are two distinct modes of discourse. And

nothing in the former mode can accomplish the work of the latter. Agent causality involves an at least tacit purposiveness that is entirely missing from natural causality. For here we have to do with the *productive causality of agents* rather than the *impersonal causality of nature*. This contrast is the very heart and soul of free will. For in the wake of a free decision, one in general can no more explain why the stream of causality took one direction instead of another than explain why A rather than B is the first letter of the alphabet *without* explicit reference to intelligent agents and their doings.

With actual acts of free will there must thus be a decision that an agent makes to inaugurate a chain of events for which—taken as a whole—that decision becomes explanatorily necessary, so that this chain of events would ordinarily neither exist nor be accountable for without the decision. The eventuation at issue is a matter not of *nature causality* but of *agent productivity* on the basis of deliberation.

In discussions of free will, theorists like to use the language of causality, and the expression of "agency causality" is very popular, pro and con. But when our will is active and we proceed to act under its aegis, the language of causality seems to become inappropriate. We do not cause our decisions to be made, we *decide* them; we do not cause our actions to occur, we *perform* them; we do not cause our hands to move, we *move* them. To speak of causality here, therefore, is unhelpful and even misleading. Agents do not cause their actions to occur: they perform them. What causes our muscles to contract are the instructions of other muscles or some such mechanism. We ourselves as agents are preoccupied with very different things: those muscle motions generally play no role in our thought. The language of "agent causality" is not very helpful here.

Suppose I take a physician's rubber-tipped mallet and deliberately hit my knee with it in a way that evokes a knee-jerk reaction. Is the resulting kick a free act or not? The situation is one of yes-and-no. It looks to be that I have freely produced an automatic (nonfree) kick. My free decision to make that mallet blow produced a result—deliberately intended by me—although this was achieved by a mechanism over which I had no further control after that hammer-hit. In such cases the ultimate result is freely engendered only by courtesy, and this courtesy is standardly and commonly in operation. One need not hesitate to say that I freely poisoned Smith when all I did was to put strychnine in his soup with a view to producing that result. It matters not that everything that occurred after my act to engender that result was outside the reach

of my control. Our communicative conventions would permit such complications of causation to be elided.

How drastically does the idea of agent productivity differ from that at issue with the causal operations of material reality? Is it enmeshed in a commitment to unintelligible obscurity? One recent writer complains:

> Agent causation is a frankly mysterious doctrine, positing something unparalleled by anything we discover in the causal processes of chemical reactionism, nuclear fission and fusion, magnetic attraction, hurricanes, volcanos, or such biological processes as metabolism, growth, immune reactions, and photosynthesis. Is there such a thing? When libertarians insist that there must be, they [build upon sand].[14]

This sounds definitive. But is it true? Is it really any stranger that a decision of mine can set my finger wiggling than that rubbing it continuously back and forth against the wood will make it warmer? Either way we have thoroughly familiar patterns of coordinated occurrence within the realm of the world's causal commerce that encompass the operations of agents and inert nature alike. In the one case one has a fuller account of the productive mechanism than in the other (though, of course, in neither case will the account be *complete*). But surely this difference in degree does not make for a difference in kind where on the one side we have transparent clarity and on the other utter comprehension. After all, exercising one's free will no more requires having an account of its workings than starting one's car by turning the ignition key requires such an understanding. After all, it is implausible to think that this sort of thing is always an illusion—that the gun would have gone off then and there, even if Roscoe had not chosen to pull the trigger. In such matters, we standardly impute productive responsibility to the agents, and no decisive considerations to the contrary have yet come to light.

As regards ownership, it is said that "possession is nine points of the law." In everyday affairs, uncontested possession counts as ownership. And the situation is analogous with free will. In its role in everyday communication and discourse, free will is thus effectively a default position, with metaphysical freedom obtaining on the basis of putative agent control and moral freedom when none of the standard obstacles to autonomous motivation (duress, inadvertence, posthypnotic suggestion, etc.) are at work.

The conception of free will with which we operate in everyday life is predicated on certain presumptions. Salient among these is that

when no productive factor of an extraordinary and untoward nature is on the scene (posthypnotic suggestion, brainwashing, or the like) the agent's decisions and actions are seen as free. The burden of proof lies on the contrary side: an agent's decisions and actions count as free unless and until some countervailing obstacle of suitable weight comes upon the scene.

From the analytical point of view, freedom is effectively a default concept, in this respect rather like the conception of moral behavior or employee loyalty. There are, in each instance, a whole host of significant and orderly recognized invalidating deviations. And beyond this there is the prospect of further exceptions that are not exhaustively specifiable in advance but clearly recognizable after the fact. But in the absence of such impediments the characterization at issue comes to be in order. Here too the idea of "innocent until proven guilty" comes upon the scene.

Notes

1. Aristotle, *Physics*, 256a5–10.
2. Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding,* Book II, Chapter xxi, section. 8.
3. See especially Aristotle*, Nicomachean Ethics* III; 1113a2–14.
4. Reid (1785), Book II, Essay I, Chapter 1.
5. "Homo est dominus sui actus, quod habit deliberationem de suis actibus." St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, ST I-II, q. 6. art. 2, ad. 2.
6. Hobbes (1654), p. 225.
7. Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, III; 433a23–25.
8. As observed in the preceding note, wrongdoing does not necessarily require intent. The person who harms another's interest in heedless indifference, and thus without any "malice aforethought," still does something morally reprehensible.
9. The responsibility-disclaiming line that a malign potency is in manipulative control of one's motives ("A voice from beyond instructed me," "The devil made me do it") is a universally recognized pathway to insanity.
10. This regressive time-compression model also puts paid to the oft-proposed objection that free will is impossible because every free decision can be completely explained in terms of conditions obtaining at an earlier time.
11. It is debatable whether reprehension (let alone punishment) is only ever warranted by an agent's morally free acts. For one thing, it could be contended that agents deserve blame (unlike punishment) not only for what they *do* but for what they *are*. (Say for a malevolent disposition to wish evil to befall people one dislikes.) For another thing, one surely deserves blame for an unthinking and uncaring indifference to the suffering of others. An agent usually simply has a certain inclination or motivation without necessarily approving of it—let alone choosing or otherwise controlling it. Nevertheless,

agents can be blamed for having the motives they do—they simply *should not* be full of envy or cupidity or malice, even though they did not actually choose to be so. Presumably they will (at least often) be able to control what they *do*, but they will not (or at least seldom) be able to control what they *are*. Yet we quite properly disapprove and reprove both things alike. You cannot be *blamed* for what you are, but you can certainly be *deprecated* for it.

12. Bergson (1910).
13. Thomas Reid, *Letter to James Gregory,* as appended to Reid (1785).
14. Dennett (1984), p. 120.

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Modes of Freedom

Synopsis

(1) The distinction between metaphysical and moral freedom is crucial for the idea of free agency in its wider sense: the former relates to production alone, the latter to its motivational ramifications. (2) Moral freedom is removed by agent-external determination of any sort: undue influence included. (3) It pivots on the formation of an agent's intentions.

1. Metaphysical and Moral Freedom

The creativity at issue with agency can be of two modes, depending on whether the agent bears *normative* or merely *productive* responsibility for the outcome. Consider the following sequence of events:

(1) John pushed the button on the car's dashboard.
(2) The pushing of the button started the car's engine.
(3) The vibrations of the engine set the car rolling downhill.
(4) The car's downhill roll ended in a collision with the telephone pole.
(5) The collision felled the telephone pole.
(6) The telephone pole's fall killed Mrs. Jones's cat.

The sequence depicts a chain of causal responsibility that extends from (1) to (6). But normative responsibility extends no further than foresight and intention. If John is a small child totally innocent of automobiles and their working, it will extend no further than (1).

The question of agency—of "What did John do?"—is actually equivocal as between

- What did John do in the causal order of consideration?
- What did John do in the normative order of consideration?

In the causal or productive order, John's agency extends all the way along the chain to (6). In the normative order, it is likely that it extends further than (2)—and certainly so if John is a small child who is "just playing around."

Now the crucial thing about free agency is that the agency at issue is that of the normative and not that of the causative order. It extends no further than the reach of an agent's cognition and intention. We shall often have to say that something done of the agent's own free will (causally) led to a certain result, while at the same time denying that he produced that result of his own free will.

There is no question that the topic of free will is fraught with subtle distinctions in whose absence an adequate treatment of the issues becomes impossible. For it is control of an agent's action by his thought that is crucial for freedom. When an action is determined by circumstances that are likely outside an agent's thought—be it conscious or not—then it cannot qualify as free. Thus, when I laugh at a joke, this response is made freely. Thought is, of course, crucial here: I would not laugh at the joke if I did not understand it because it was told in Mandarin. But when I flinch when stuck with a needle, my response is not free—what I think about the matter has nothing to do with it; I may well "never have seen it coming."

Some writers worry whether an agent is ever in charge—is ever really in control of what he does.[1] But this concern is effectively sidelined by the standing communicative convention that control, like innocence, is always there unless the contrary can be established. The concept, as we operate it, is subject to the idea that unless situation-specific counterindications are at hand, agent-control stands in place as a defeasible presumption.[2]

Overall, free will is a matter of an agent's capacity to resolve choices by thought in line with his own motives. Two component factors are thus pivotally at issue here. The first of these, *metaphysical* freedom, is a matter of thought-determination, and as such is dichotomously present or absent. (It does, however, have an overt and tacit version, depending on whether the thinking at issue is explicitly deliberative or whether it proceeds subconsciously.) The second factor, namely *moral* freedom, is a matter of the extent to which the agent's motives can be characterized as authentically his own. It is a matter of degree, ranging from "zero" (absence) when (for example) the agent acts under duress, to a partial presence, when the agent acts under undue influence (the demand of a superior officer, for example, or of his "boss"), to full presence when the agent acts in line with his own wants and wishes (naturally and normally originated). Motive formation is the crux.

When I testify in court as a reluctant witness and follow the bailiff's instruction to "Raise your right hand," I do so of my own free will because I am in *operational* control of what happens, but I am not in *functional* control because what I do is a response to externally imposed constraints. My act is accordingly free in the metaphysical sense of the term, albeit not so in the moral sense. But when I raise my hand for the sake of an example designed to show you that as a free agent I am sometimes in control of what I do, then we do have an instance of a morally free act. Moral freedom, accordingly, pivots on the agent's being motivated by his own agenda, without manipulation or undue influence by others. Such freedom fills the gap left by the absence of excuses of "they made me do it" types.

Metaphysical freedom of action concerns the matter of *agency* pure and simple. The question is merely whether that agent did the act at issue, with the issue of why he did in entirely in abeyance. However, moral freedom will in its turn pivot on this issue of motivation. In the one case only *productive* responsibility is at issue, in the other the mode of motivation also comes onto the agenda.

As a rule we can say of an agent that *he has acted freely in deliberately doing what he believes, in the circumstances, will conduce to the realization of his objectives*. But this seemingly straightforward formula leaves a great deal unsaid and requires much commentary and qualification. The following points are salient here:

- "deliberately" is meant to exclude inadvertence. If, en route to the light switch with a view to illuminating a dark room, the agent stumbles and accidentally moves the switch he meant to throw, we cannot say that the act of turning on the switch and lighting up the room was performed freely.
- "believes" is meant to indicate the subjectivity of the agent's perspective in free action. As best we can tell, Oedipus freely married the beautiful widow, Jocasta. But he did not freely marry his own mother.

The agent's beliefs are of the essence. These two points relate to metaphysical freedom. Moral freedom adds another dimension. In particular:

- "his objectives" is intended to indicate the agent's own immediate aims. If I open the safe while you point a gun at my head, I am "doing what I want to do" only in the immediate sense of ensuring my survival. Facilitating your theft is not really part of my personal agenda.

While metaphysical freedom is negated by thought-exclusion, it nevertheless remains when that thought proceeds subconsciously without explicit deliberation. By contrast, moral freedom is destroyed by outright duress (e.g., threat of injury) and diminished with a loss of autonomy through the operation of undue influence.[3]

Consider the following situation:

> —I administer a poison to you.
> —I regret this and proceed to provide an anecdote.
> —*X* intercepts me and prevents its delivery.

There is no question that I am *causally* responsible for your death. But the issue of *moral* responsibility is something else again, something beckoned by such questions as:

1. Did I initially act because you pleaded with me to end your suffering?
2. Is it *X* who is really (morally) responsible for your death because you would have lived but for his actions?

Causal and moral responsibility are very different sorts of issues. And much the same holds with causal and moral freedom with regard to agency. In the above circumstance it is doubtless the case that I freely administered that poison to you. But it cannot be said that I freely poisoned you (in the moral sense of that term).

The metaphysical/ontological freedom at issue with the question "Is the act in question one for which the agent bears *productive* responsibility; that is, is it something he did in line with his decisions and choices?" always leaves room for the very different *additional* question of moral freedom: "Given that the act is one for which the agent bears such productive responsibility, to what extent does he deserve *moral* responsibility for it as reflected by praise or blame?" Metaphysical freedom is merely a matter of exercising productivity via thought, while moral freedom, by contrast, also addresses the nature of the motivation at work. Moral freedom is thus a matter of proceeding on one's own account and one's own autonomously self-rooted motivation—acting spontaneously (*sua sponte*) in the Scholastic sense of the expression.[4]

A metaphysically free act is typically one that an agent can do or not do as he chooses via deliberation (however cursory), although even acts performed unthinkingly but in line with a deliberately adopted *policy* of action that has issued in an automatic habit—brushing one's teeth

in the morning, for example—will still count as (metaphysically) free. Just this is what Descartes had in view when he wrote the following:

> The faculty of will consists simply in our having the power of choosing to do something or choosing not to do it.[5]

Metaphysical (or *operational*) freedom is well characterized in Thomas Hobbes' specification that "he is a free agent that can do if he will and forbear if he will."[6] Such freedom is freedom from impediment to action. *Moral* (or *personal*) freedom, by contrast, involves a good deal more, namely freedom from interference in forming one's volitions. Here the crux of the matter is agent-inaugurated spontaneity where, as Thomas Hobbes told us:

> In the Latin of all authors but Schoolmen, *actio spontanea* signifies that action whereof there is no apparent cause derived further than from the agent itself.[7]

It is effectively in this self-productive sense that we shall use the term *spontaneity*, here, going on to maintain that a free action is one that arises from the personal spontaneity of the agent. Morally free agency lies in the capacity to do as one wants and wishes, where those wants and wishes themselves are autonomously self-engendered rather than heteronomously imposed by internal external manipulation. Not motivational determination as such but its manner as specifically self-rooted is crucial for moral freedom.

Already Aristotle wisely distinguished between an action done voluntarily by choice and one done willingly on one's own preferences, citing as voluntary but unwilling the case of seamen who jettison a cargo to lighten the ship to escape seizure by an enemy and thus cannot be held morally responsible for the cargo's loss.[8]

If an agent's doings are not the determinate product of his own choices and decisions, then they do not really qualify as *his actions* at all. Thus, Hume was right to stress that the proper contrary to free agency is not determination/necessity but constraint. A determinism of sorts—namely determination *by the agent* on the basis of the motives at work in his deliberations—is not only compatible with free will but essential to it.

Metaphysical free agency is largely a question of whether the agent is *productively responsible* for the outcome; the crux with moral free

agency is whether the agent is *morally responsible* for the outcome through producing it not only in line with his motives but, further, in line with his own autonomously fixed motives—that is, whether he acts autonomously on *his own motivational account.*

For an action to qualify as (metaphysically) free it must be under the control of the agent by factors in the range of beliefs and desires. Control by thought is of the essence. The agent must "know what he is doing" if only in the obscure way one would describe as "subconscious awareness." And the agent must be willing (if only reluctantly or even unhappily) to perform the act. However, for moral freedom one must add autonomous motivation—namely that the agent acts from a motivation of his own, rather than from motives that have been imposed upon him by others. For most freedom to be absent, something on the order of posthypnotic suggestions, Pavlovian conditioning, drugging, or brainwashing is called for—something that prevents the agent from being in control of his choice through the operation of his mind. Agent-external impulsion is the decisive obstacle to metaphysical freedom; moral freedom, by contrast, calls for act determination by the agent's own normally and autonomously functioning proceedings in matters of desire and decision. It is integral and constitutive of the very concept of moral free agency that whatever I do in consequence of my choices made in line with my own wants and desires without undue influence or untoward manipulation is done freely. And, in practice, freedom is a default position that obtains in the absence of determinable obstacles. An individual who talks with someone in English (rather than some other language that he knows) resolves the language-choice freely (in most instances) without giving the matter any thought. The action is spontaneous, automatic, and undeliberated, but the choice made is nevertheless made freely. And moral freedom is not blocked by the circumstance that agents do not (in general) choose their own aims and inclinations. For one's motivations are generally no more optional than one's blood-type or DNA. They are, on the whole, neither matters of choice nor matters of external imposition or manipulation, but simply facets of what one is as distinct from what one does.[9]

Autonomy of motive must not be equated with an agent's opportunity for choice or even for control. By and large we do not *choose* to believe someone, nor when we doubt something do we *control* our so doing. Nor do we generally choose to like someone or control our feeling annoyed at something. And yet, such reactions are generally

autonomous since external impetus compels us to have them. In the normal course of things, they are formed from within: autonomously. And where our motivations are concerned it is such autonomy that matters: choice and control do not come into it. The motivations of people usually are—and are generally presumed to be—formed in the ordinary course of things, without the intervention of undue and thereby exculpatory manipulation or influence.

At a certain stage of a card game, Smith plays the three of spades. That looks to be a free act. But this self-same act of his can bear different explanatory constructions and elaborations:

- Smith played the three of spades deliberately and with intention aforethought.
- Smith played the three of spades inadvertently because he accidentally and unintentionally took hold of the wrong card.

Smith's *physical action* is the same either way and puts his metaphysical freedom to work. But Smith's *actual act* is quite different in these two cases, and only the second one deserves to be characterized as (metaphysically) free. (And even this might not have been a *morally* free act if Smith's proceedings had been hypnotically pre-programmed.)

The conception of free will with which we operate in everyday life is predicated on certain presumptions. Salient among these is that when no productive factor of an extraordinary and combined nature is on the scene (posthypnotic suggestion, brainwashing, or the like) the agent's decision and actions are seen as free. The burden of proof lies on the contrary side: an agent's decisions and actions count as free unless and until some countervailing obstacle of suitable weight comes upon the scene.

It is an important aspect of moral freedom that decisional responsibility is by nature indelible. It is something that just cannot be transmitted onto others, whether human or mechanical. I can certainly delegate a decision among alternatives to a coin toss or the spin of a roulette wheel. I also can hand it over to an expert counselor or advisory committee. But in taking this recourse—in adopting and implementing those outsourced decisions—I endorse and ratify them. And this is invariably and unavoidably something that I do on my own. Responsibly inevitably stays with the decider. The decider can certainly get external help in making his decisions. But in the final analysis he cannot get

others to make those decisions for him. Another person cannot make your decision any more than they can take your nap.

In its role in everyday thought and discourse, free will is effectively a default position with metaphysical freedom obtaining on the basis of agent control and moral freedom when none of the standard obstacles to autonomous motivation (duress, inadvertence, posthypnotic suggestions, etc.) are at work.

As regards ownership, it is said that "possession is nine-tenths of the law." In everyday affairs, uncontested possession counts as ownership. And the situation is analogous with free will. We so implement the concept that here too the absence of disqualification serves as the doorway to qualification.

In principle, a free choice can be spontaneous (nondeliberated) and even made subconsciously. The crux of free agency is the factor of autonomous determination by an agent's thought in the absence of any undue agent-external control. Whether that control is exercised deliberately and consciously or unwittingly and without explicit deliberation is ultimately irrelevant for metaphysical freedom. In the normal course of things, when someone laughs at a joke they (standardly) do so freely, despite there being no deliberation or decision. (Note the essential role of mind—if the joke is told in a language the agent does not understand, he is not going to laugh.)

Attributions or denials of free agency, accordingly, have to find their way through a dense forest of complex issues. (Thus, if I disable the brakes of your car, I do not freely produce the ensuing crash, because this is an outcome I do not control: what I do control and freely produce is the failure of the car to respond to braking.)

In briefest summary, the pivotal questions for free agency are as follows:

(1) Was the agent in control of the outcome?
(2) Was this control exercised with explicit or at least tacit and subconscious deliberations?
(3) Did these deliberations proceed in the light of the agent's own autonomously formed and normally developed motivational manifold?

In the light of (1) we would have to say that the man who willingly stays in Locke's locked room makes a free decision, but does not perform a free act. In the light of (2) we can say that the man who routinely and unthinkingly brushes his teeth after breakfast acts freely. It is issue (3) that is going to pose the greatest problems.

When can it be said that an agent's motivation is that agent's own rather than something imposed from without? And just where does the line between self and without actually lie?

The boundary is not easy to draw. It hinges on what is "ordinary" and what is "normal" in contrast to what comes via "undue influence," what is spontaneously self-developed and what is imposed by overt intervention. One's liking for biographies in contrast to thrillers is most likely formed autonomously, as is one's dislike of snakes and spiders. One's culturally imputed dislike of "the other" (say, their nation or political party) is presumably something else again.

And even with externally imposed motivations, the case is not always that clear because the potentially problematic extent to which I can and should resist them also is going to be relevant.

2. Moral Freedom is Removed by Manipulation and Especially Compulsion

But be all this as it may, the salient point remains: once metaphysical freedom is in place, the issue of moral freedom will hinge on the agent's autonomy in relation to the operative motivations for his act, with that act as unfree to the extent that those motivations are not his own but externally imposed upon him. However, the line between imposition and natural information will be murky. If I have been taught by my culture since infancy to regard horsemeat as abhorrent, is my decision to decline that horseburger really free? Presumably, yes, because it issues from the inclinations of my naturally forced nature. (If I had been intentionally manipulated, the matter would be different.)

An ideally free action, then, is one that issues from a well deliberated decision arrived at on the basis of the agent's autonomously developed motives. Thus, circumstance clearly renders free agency into something that is not dichotomously yes-or-no but is a matter of more-or-less, of extent or degree. And so there will certainly be acts that are free, but not ideally free—acts whose freedom is compromised by the quality of the agent's motivating thought (which may be less than consciously and arguably deliberated) or by the quality of the agent's motivation (which may be less than fully autonomous and constitute some of the agent's own personal agenda). And yet the fact remains that even subideally free is still free, even as an act that is subideally kind or generous is still kind or generous.

But one important point deserves stress. The pivot is whether the agent herself actually has those motivations, not whether the agent likes or approves of herself having them. The selfish or envious individual may not like being selfish or envious, and very decidedly wishes that matters were otherwise. But nevertheless envious actions arising from these motivational dispositions are authentically hers: she cannot say "Nature made me that way, so I'm not responsible." Moral freedom is not abrogated by flaws of character.

For many theorists, free agency pivots on the question of whether the agent could have acted otherwise in the circumstances. And this, in turn, raises the question of possible impediments to the agent's proceeding alternatively. There are two prime possibilities here, namely:

- *agent-externally imposed impediments*: pressure, *force majeure*, and other externally inserted modes of interference.
- *agent-internally imposed impediments*: the agent's own tastes, habits, phobias, etc.

Only the former sorts of impediments will count as abrogating morally free agency. The agent cannot deflect responsibility by pleading "My innate avarice (or snake-aversion or colorblindness) made me do it." Granted, such a claim may well be altogether true. And it is also true that the agent does not control his psychic constitution in these regards. But exactly because these features are his, and determinative of the sort of being he is, he must bear the onus of their implications. One does not—cannot—choose to be the sort of person one is. It is not one's will but one's nature that is operative here. And the acts that motivationally issue from one's nature—rather more than one's will—nevertheless qualify as free acts.

It deserves stress in this context that only external and not internal impediments count as abrogating free agency. Consequently, one cannot say "He did not freely leave that small room because his claustrophobia made him do it."

But this, of course, relates to the issue of *metaphysical* freedom. The agent's *moral* responsibility can be mitigated or even annihilated by internal as well as external intrusion into the agent's thought—by panic or phobia as well as by threat and intimidation. But this sort of thing will not, of itself, countervail against the agent's *metaphysical* freedom of action.

The contrast between moral and metaphysical freedom is exhibited in Display 1. *Moral freedom calls for acting willingly on one's own terms*; one's own agenda of aims, goals, and ideas. For as long as those actuating motives are autonomously positioned on the agent's agenda by the natural course of things without externally imposed constraint, manipulation, or undue influence, the agent is morally as well as metaphysically free.

After all, people not only act but react. Even our seemingly free action can involve some element of passivity. Consider the person who opens wide and says "AHH" when asked to do so by the doctor. He is certainly acting in response to what another does. But he still acts freely. Again, suppose we are playing chess. I would never have moved my queen had you not threatened her. Did I move her freely? Certainly so in the metaphysical sense of the term. (I *could* have chosen otherwise and let you capture her.) But in the moral sense of the term "free action," such a response to external threat and pressure imposed from without is not free. The motivation of my decision did not as such lie on my own agenda (moving that queen was not part of my plan and strategy of play). So, two distinct modes of freedom are at issue—the one autonomous and integral to the agent's own agenda of aims and objectives; the other external and motivated by (often unwelcome) developments imposed upon the agent by interfering agents and agencies. Externally originating imposition (manipulation, interference) diminishes

Display 1

REQUISITES OF FREE CHOICE/DELIBERATION

Metaphysical Freedom	Moral Freedom
• standing as an intelligent *agent*	• standing as a *moral* agent
• agent decision	• metaphysical freedom
• agent intention and motivation	• acting on one's own autonomously formed motivational agenda
• agent productivity	
• agent control	

the agent's "freedom of maneuver" (so to speak) and constrains him to respond in often reluctant ways.

And so the moral freedom of an agent can become diminished (and ultimately even removed altogether), even with respect to choices and actions regarding which he exercises otherwise unfettered productive control and metaphysical freedom. The lesson of Shakespeare's *Othello* holds good—agents can be manipulated into doing things that they would not otherwise dream of doing. And in these cases the moral status of the action becomes transformed. (Generally, such acts are performed deliberately, with intent aforethought; but sometimes they are the product of habit and routine, and sometimes a matter of spur-of-the moment whim.)

It is, clearly, not enough for full-fledged freedom of choice or decision that the result should issue from the agent's motivational deliberations. For while this will suffice for *metaphysical* freedom, nevertheless for *moral* freedom it will matter how these motives themselves have come to be constituted—whether autonomously in the ordinary development of the agent's thought-life or heteronomously by extra-ordinary imposition from without (through threat, hypnosis, brain-washing, enticement, or the like). This further moral dimension raises additional issues.

The role of free will in morality is a complex topic that we shall not here pursue at length. Suffice it to say that the oft-voiced idea that an act is morally reprehensible only when it is freely done is something that cannot be sustained. Consider, for example, such cases as:

- The parent who forgets, while attending to some (conceivably important) errand, that an infant has been left in a sundrenched car.
- The workman who inadvertently and accidentally—but without due precaution—trips a switch that activates some pathway to disaster.

People are blameworthy not just for transgressions of free commission but for transgressions of omission as well, even when those omissions occur inadvertently and without malice aforethought. It is often the case that *X* should not have done *A* (e.g., failed to manifest proper gratitude for some boon received) even when doing *A* was not the result of a free decision. But these are complex issues that do not go to the core of our present concern.

Intention is a crucial factor with morally free agency. This is why cases of mistaken identity are so instructive here. In particular, we cannot reason as per the following pattern:

- A freely did A.
- In doing A, X also did B.
- X freely did B.

For example:

- Oedipus freely married Jocasta.
- In marrying Jocasta, Oedipus married his own mother.
- Oedipus freely married his own mother.

The flaw of the reasoning is that its validity would require adding "knowingly" or "deliberately" in the second premise. Without this addition the chain of intentionality that is the grounds for moral freedom is broken. (Metaphysical freedom is something else again.) So when I pick the winning horse in the race, did I do so freely? Proper usage requires careful distinctions. We could indeed say that I freely picked Excelsior, and Excelsior was indeed the winner. But we would have to refrain from saying that I freely picked the winner.

Thomas Hobbes gave an instructive example: The man who at the warder's instruction walks from the prison yard to his cell does so freely but not willingly—that is, he does so with metaphysical rather than moral freedom. The motive of his metaphysically free act is forced upon him *ab extra* by a superior power—to the loss of the moral freedom of his action. He acts freely in the metaphysical sense, but not in the moral sense—on his own account. However, since moral freedom includes but also transcends metaphysical freedom, the former clearly cannot exist without the latter. For with moral freedom the pivotal issue is that of the basis of those motivating agent-internal considerations, with some factors excluded, namely *undue influence* (compulsion, coercion, seduction, temptation, bribery, and outright mind-bending as with hypnosis, brainwashing, mind-altering drugs, etc.). With moral freedom the operative motivation must be of the ordinary sort at work when normal people manage their everyday actions in the normal way.[10]

The "internality" that is operative here is a default conception, to the effect that the motivation at issue is formed without such "external" interaction as threats, duress, hypnosis, brainwashing, passion, undue influence, "or the like." And here, as with any other sort of misadventure, the ways in which things go wrong is open-ended: there is no prospect of providing a complete list. After all, who can specify all the devious ways yet to be found to manipulate the mind of man? And this means that normal or normative freedom is no more a precise concept than

that of a "chair." But such imprecision no more invalidates the concept in the one case than in the other.

Some theorists simply equate morally free and morally responsible action.[11] But this regimentation does violence to the standard way of conceiving these issues. For one thing, it would appear that agents can plausibly be held morally accountable for acts not done freely (e.g., by inadvertently injuring someone in circumstances where greater care should have been taken). Decisions made under the influence of drink and drugs are not metaphysically free and yet do not abrogate moral responsibility if those conditions themselves are deliberately self-engendered. Moral responsibility is thus something quite different from moral freedom. Even if the agent acts reluctantly and yields to distasteful pressure—and thus acts without moral freedom—he can still be held morally responsible to the extent that this situation is of his own making. And on the other hand, a misdeed can be done freely for which the agent is not morally accountable (as with a nurse who freely administers to the patient a poison that, thanks to mislabeling, she conceives to be a needed medication). In such circumstances of mismatch when what the agent is thinking to do is actually doing something else, the more usual connection between freedom and responsibility can become unraveled.

Again, consider a situation where there are two switches. Normally switch *A* turns the light on, switch *B* turns the heat on. *X* throws *A* intending to turn the light on, not knowing that *Y* has arranged a reversal of function. So, in (freely) throwing switch *A*, *X* has (actually) turned the heat on. Does such defective intention defeat free agency? Yes and no. What has *X* done? He (1) threw switch *A*, and thereby (2) turned on the heat. He did (1) freely, but not (2). But suppose that terrible consequences, known to all, will ensue from turning on the heat, and further that the reversal in question was well publicized and was something that *X ought to have known*. Then we would hold *X* responsible for that unintended result on the basis of culpable ignorance (he "should have known better")—despite the fact that he did not produce that result freely. So there are exceptions to the general rule that moral free agency is a prerequisite for moral responsibility. And while flawed information does not defeat *metaphysical* (productive) freedom it can abolish *moral* freedom, where intention predominates.

The great Harvard philosophy teacher George Herbert Palmer defined freedom as "that self-guidance through which, for purposes of our own, we narrow a dual future possibility to a single actual result."[12]

This seemingly plausible specification has several problems, as per the following issues: (1) The guidance need not be in the self—I can freely choose to follow my physician's advice. (2) Those future possibilities can, of course, be multiple instead of merely dual. (3) Moreover, they need not be *real* possibilities but can be merely seeming possibilities that lie in the mind of the agent (again—Locke's locked room). (4) Moreover, the "actual result"—the actual outcome of my decision—need not be in line with what is decided (again, that locked room); it would be better to speak of "choice" or "alternative" rather than "actual result." All this said, Palmer's insistence on "for purposes of our own" is right on target if moral rather than merely metaphysical freedom is to be at issue.

Metaphysical freedom is at bottom a *positive* freedom: a freedom to do certain things—principally to make choices and decisions. Moral freedom is at bottom a *negative* freedom: a freedom from certain modes of interference from without—pressure, constraint, deception, and the like. Moral freedom is thus at work when the motivation of our resolution emerges from our own agenda of wants and interests rather than being imposed upon us in a manner rooted in the agenda of another. In general, saying that an agent made a certain choice or decision freely is to claim that this resolution emerged from his thoughts and deliberations on the basis of motivating grounds that figured there. To move on from this sort of *metaphysical* freedom to *moral* freedom requires that those motivations be formed by the agent on his own, spontaneously, without external interference, manipulation, or undue influence. On this basis the sort of developments that defeat freedom will differ as per the summary of Display 2.

3. Intention and Moral Standing

When C. A Campbell wrote that the "only freedom implied by moral responsibility is freedom from compulsion,"[13] he was rather hasty. For the factors that block moral freedom from choice also include, among others, undue influence and agent-external manipulation in all its forms. (The ancients here also counted violent passion and the consequent loss of agent self-control, but this is rather stretched.

Specifically, when the facts are misrepresented to him, the agent's moral freedom is decisively abridged by such deceit. (Think of Othello.) And when the existence of certain options is concealed from the agent, or if the consequences of certain choices are misrepresented to him, then that agent's freedom is abrogated as surely as if he had been coerced.

Display 2

DEFEATERS OF FREEDOM

METAPHYSICAL FREEDOM	MORAL FREEDOM
• Thought-independent termination	• Deceit (and blameless misinformation)
• Coercion and compulsion	• Undue pressure (threat)
• Manipulation (e.g., hypnosis, brain-washing, etc.)	• Heteronymous motive formation (e.g., malign conditioning)
• Psychologically defective deliberation (drugs and drink; mental aberration)	

The sort of autonomous choice or decision that is requisite for moral freedom calls for that inevitable minimum of other-dependency that characterizes the run-of-the mill course of everyday human affairs. The crux of moral freedom is thus autonomy—the *SELF-determination* to action that has long been deemed paramount in this context. As Spinoza already put it, with moral freedom, "that thing is called free . . . whose action is determined by itself alone."[14] And so, while metaphysical freedom merely requires productivity, morally free action must route autonomously in the agent's own account and not heteronomously in response to undue influence imposed upon him from without.

In moral appraisal we judge people not only for what they *do* but for what they *are* in terms of the nature of their inner psychic life. Granted, the two are interrelated. Ontologically, what people are will often express itself in what they do (they lie because they are congenital liars). Epistemologically, what people do often evidentiates what they are (they mark themselves as congenital liars by lying a lot). But moral approval applies equally and independently on both sides of the fence: we disapprove both of the lying and of the liar. And we do this irrespective of the fact that only the one is the product of a free choice and not the other.

The distinction between metaphysical and moral freedom of the will is of far-reaching significance. Most—indeed virtually all—libertarians see freedom as a prerequisite for morally significant choice. But even more fundamental is the issue of intelligent agency as such—of being able so to function on the world stage as actually to *do* something—to make a difference in the course of events by means of one's thought-

guided actions and thereby, to at least some extent, to be in control of the conditions of one's own existence. The problem of free will is not wholly owned by the moral philosopher. It matters for our fundamental understanding of the nature of man and so concerns both metaphysics and philosophical anthropology.

Where moral freedom is concerned, there is a crucial difference between persuasion and constraint. Persuasion leaves one morally free, constraint does not. With persuasion I am induced to act on the basis of my own agenda; with constraint I am forced to act on the basis of someone else's. In both cases alike I will (by hypothesis) be acting with productive (metaphysical) responsibility, but only in the former case will the moral responsibility be fully mine, undiminished and intact. An agent can, however, bear moral responsibility. Even for decisions and choices that are not morally free—but result, say, from deception or compulsion—when that otherwise exculpatory situation is achieved through the agent's own fault or failing (through gullibility, say, in the case of deception, or heedless self-expression in the case of compulsion), moral culpability yet remains.

Of course, choices can be delegated—for example, to another individual or even to a random device. But the decision actually to implement the results of such a choice-delegation always lies with the initiating agent—and the responsibility for the outcome is thereby inalienably his.

Harry Frankfurt offers various examples to support the idea that even a morally unfree agent might plausibly be held responsible in circumstances where no alternative is open to him.[15] The initially eager but now unwilling participant in a gang's bank robbery may not be able to withdraw. The moral aspects of free agency are unavoidably complex. In certain cases moral mitigation will thus be a complicated matter. For example, even a person who is deceived into doing some wrongful act might nevertheless incur culpability though insufficient care to avoid this deception. And so I can be morally responsible for any damage resulting from things I did not freely do—especially in matters of omission such as forgetting to take some safety precautions or taking insufficient care to follow instructions when administering Grandfather's medicine. But be this as it may, the fact remains that far more than a metaphysical freedom is required for an act to qualify as morally free—specifically that the act be done willingly, intentionally, deliberately, and autonomously.[16] To be sure, even an agent who acts with moral freedom need not be happy or enthusiastic about it; he may well see it as the least of the evils.

It is often said that moral merit—credit and discredit, praise and blame, reward and punishment—is only due where there is free action. But this view of the matter confuses morality with law. Legal prosecution requires overt action, but moral reprehension does not. The law no doubt does or should bestow its punishments and rewards only for what people do, but there is no reason why morality cannot reach beyond this. After all, ill-will and Schadenfreude are *morally* reprehensible even where they do not engender overt action. The fact of it is that what renders a rational agent morally responsible is not just what he *does* but what he *thinks*. Whenever the motivating considerations that guide the agent in making his choices and decisions are wicked (or, as the case may be, noble), he thereby opens himself to moral assessment.

The long and short of it is that moral quality derives basically from intentions and only obliquely from actions, and there is no good reason why we cannot praise a person's motives, intentions, and dispositions with the same legitimacy with which we praise the acts of his *doing* by virtue of his *having* them. The agent whose thoughts and intentions are evil deserve moral reprehension even if they are never put into active operation. Immanuel Kant was entirely right about this: where morality is concerned, intent trumps action. The linkage between moral responsibility and free action must not be drawn too tight.

Think again of John Locke's hypothetical man emplaced in a room which, unbeknownst to him, has all the exits sealed.[17] But now he needs a message—a friend of his desperately needs his help. As far as action goes, our man has no alternative: staying put is the only course open to him. But let us suppose that he does the inevitable and stays put, but does so just because he decides to do so, and chooses to turn a deaf ear to this friend's need. As far as action goes, he has no choice: he must stay put—he cannot do otherwise. But this does not let him off the hook of reprehension: he does not try, does not intend, nay does not even *wish* to help. The fact of it is that he *thinks* he can do otherwise and (freely) chooses not even to try. So the point is clear enough: moral blame and reprehension (unlike *legal* sanctions) can attach also to what is merely thought and intention rather than actual and overt action. Here the retrospective excuse "But I couldn't have acted differently in the circumstances" does not wipe the moral slate clean. Moral assessment can survive a concession of act inevitability.[18] As Immanuel Kant taught, it is intention that is paramount where morality is at issue.[19]

Locke's example also decisively settles in the affirmative the question "Can someone freely decide upon something that is inevitable and

will occur irrespectively of what this agent thinks and does?"[20] But, of course, a free decision is meaningful in its wider import only when the agent is *rightly* persuaded that outcomes could be made to differ if he himself chose or decided otherwise—that is, that he is in control of what happens on the basis of his decisions and their implementation. The crux of a doctrine of free will is that what actually and objectively happens in the world can sometimes be made to hinge upon what happens in the realm of thought and to do so in a way that aligns with the intentions at issue in that thinking, so that outcomes are actually under the control of explicit or at least subconscious thought.

And this matter of thought-control is crucial for metaphysical freedom. Consider the agent who, intending to murder X, feeds him a poison that, unbeknownst to our agent, is actually the antidote to yet another poison administered earlier on by Y. What he actually does by his free act (administering the poison) is in fact to save his victim's life. But since this is entirely contrary to his intention, we can hardly say he did so voluntarily. A theory of free will does well to focus on effort and intent rather than action and performance.

Let it be that Smith shot Jones. Then what did our agent actually do? What was the act he performed? In truth, he may have done quite a lot.

- He formed an intention to act.
- He decided to shoot.
- He decided to shoot the victim.
- He pulled the trigger.
- He set the bullet into motion.
- He shot the victim.
- He killed the victim.
- He created panic among the bystanders.
- He caused an election (since the now-defunct victim was the mayor).

The question of what the agent did—and did freely—is quite amorphous. It admits of many different, albeit correct responses—in theory so many of them that we could not track them all. Free *metaphysical* (*productive*) agency as such covers much ground; but free *moral* (*normative*) agency looks more restrictively to matters of intent and motivation and the correlative reduction is a complicated business. Moral freedom is thus something more subtle and complex that goes well beyond mere free agency. The intricacies of deliberation in moral matters are no less convoluted than those one encounters in the legal domain.

Notes

1. See Strasser (1992), pp. 118–19.
2. See Rescher (2005).
3. Ordinary influence that is not "undue" is not a problem as long as it is exerted via the agent's own motivating agenda. If you ask me what is the French for "cat" and I (wanting to be cooperative) say it is "chat," my declaration is made freely, notwithstanding its being motivated by your request.
4. To be sure, this moral status is also something objective and reflective of the "fact of the matter." Who, after all, said that moral matters could not be so?
5. René Descartes, *Meditations*, IV.
6. Thomas Hobbes, "The Question Concerning Liberty, Necessity, and Choice," No. XXXIII, section (f).
7. Ibid.
8. Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*.
9. It is discussable whether reprehension (let alone punishment) is only ever warranted by an agent's morally free acts. For one thing, it could be contended that agents deserve blame (unlike punishment) not only for what they *do* but for what they *are* (say, for a malevolent disposition to wish evil to befall people one dislikes). For another thing, one surely deserves blame for an unthinking and uncaring indifference to the suffering of others. An agent usually simply has a certain inclination or motivation without necessarily approving of it—let alone choosing or otherwise controlling it. Nevertheless agents can be blamed for having the motives they do—they simply *should not* be full of envy or cupidity or malice, even though they did not actually choose to be so. Presumably they will (at least often) be able to control what they *do*, but then will not (or at least seldom) be able to control what they *are*. Yet we quite properly disapprove and reprove both things alike. You cannot be *blamed* for what you are, but you can certainly be *deprecated* for it.
10. On the pivotal role of normalcy in philosophical deliberations see the author's *Philosophical Standardism* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1994).
11. See, for example, G. Sharson (2004).
12. G. H. Palmer, *The Problem of Freedom*, p. 18.
13. Campbell (1967), p. 21. Campbell was here describing the position of Mortz Schlick.
14. Spinoza, *Ethics*, Book I, def. VII.
15. See Frankfurt (1973) and (1988).
16. Various viewpoints on issues of responsibility are represented in the following anthology: Peter A. French (ed.) (1991).
17. John Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, Book II, Chapter 21.
18. Compare Dennett (1984), pp. 553–65.
19. On this theme see Kant's *Critique of Practical Reason*.
20. To be sure, a rational agent will not—cannot—deliberate about something that he sees (rightly or wrongly) as being inevitable.

3

Ramifications of Freedom

Synopsis

(1) Metaphysical free will does not conflict with predictivity but rather with anything that would deprive the agent of control over outcomes by thought. (2)With authentic freedom, the prospect of revocation and change of mind must be there until the moment of the ultimate decision itself. (3) Free agency requires thought but not necessarily willingly with overt attention; after all, subconscious thinking is not a matter of total unconsciousness. Explicit deliberation is not required for free will. (4) Free volition has a crucially counterfactual "what would be if" aspect—that is, if the agent thought differently about matters. (5) On this basis, such problem cases as those of machines and madmen can plausibly be addressed.

1. Free Will Requires Up-To-The-End Revisability But This Does Not Gainsay Probabilistic Predictability

As the issue appears to free-will endorsers—"libertarians" as they are often called—something fundamentally new and different emerges on the world stage in the course of evolution's production of intelligent free agents. For there now are beings who can bring about physical occurrences in consequence of their mental operations—consequences that would never be there but for things that they themselves do with their minds. The crux of the doctrine of free agency is the idea that the thought-activities of intelligent beings can result in deflecting the course of the world's physical processes into directions different from those that would otherwise obtain. So the upshot is that in some respect what actually occurs on the world's physical stage is at least in part the product of the deliberative thought activities of intelligent beings—that such beings can deploy thought to exert causality in the realm of physical occurrence.

Some theorists have it that the crux of free will lies in the unpredictability of human action and the indeterminacy of human choices. But this is a very dubious proposition. For the exercise of free will does *not* render one's decisions automatically unpredictable. If I know your taste in books or in moving pictures, then I can confidently predict your free selections among various alternatives—and will, in general, probably be right—without any infringement on your freedom. And we can safely predict of a sensible person that she will freely choose to do those things which are—in the circumstances—the sensible things to do. The idea of "rational self-interest" actually provides a powerful predictive resource in the context of human affairs. Determining what it is that, from the angle of *their* aims and values, is the most advantageous thing for people to do provides a generally effective procedure for predicting their comportment. Thus, it is easy to predict what a competent mathematician will arrive at when seeking the solution of a problem, though one would find it quite difficult to say just what an *incompetent* mathematician will come up with—a circumstance that clearly does not make him any the freer. Accordingly, the operation of a power of free choice certainly does not mean that there *must* be unpredictability.[1] Freedom and predictability do not conflict as long as no loss of agent control is involved.

Suppose that I am offered a choice between vanilla and chocolate wafers, and I choose chocolate. If ever I make a free choice, this is it. But the outcome is foreshadowed by my well-established affinity to chocolate. And anyone who knows me well has no trouble with prediction here. But, of course, the pivot for freedom here is not unpredictability but the nature of the factors that render prediction possible. They do not lie in matters external to myself and somehow imposed upon me, but in factors internal to myself as the individual I am. The key consideration here is that freedom lies not in the absence of predictability or determination as such, but rather in the absence of externally imposed determinations—those that do not function internally to the agent but are somehow imposed *ab extra* by duress, *force majeure*, undue influence, or some other such autonomy-annihilating factor.

St. Augustine was accordingly on the right track in maintaining that God's foreknowledge does not abrogate man's possession of free will,

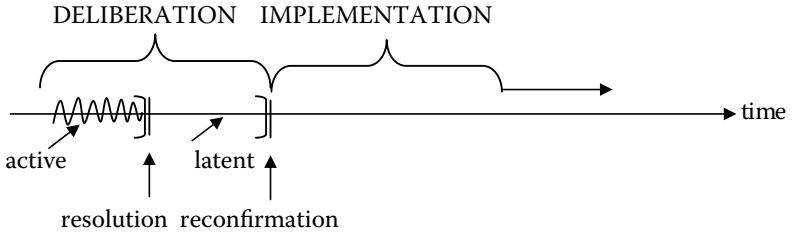
seeing that what God must be supposed to foreknow is simply how we put that free will to work.[2] And the key point here is that God's realizing what we freely do in resolving our choices can still leave us in charge. For here the direction of explanatory impetus is of the essence: God foreknows what we decide *because* of its being our choice, and not the reverse—its being our choice *because* he foreknows it. (It is not only in mathematical physics that the difference between a dependent and an independent variable matters!) Neither human forecasts nor divine foresight need stand in the way of free decisions. Externally intrusive constraints are one thing, but internally rooted inclinations and predispositions are something else again. In the final analysis free will resides in the nature of the mental ("interior") process of deciding because the *outcome* all too often lies outside the agent's control. What the agent is indeed in full and complete charge of, however, is only what he *endeavors* to do on the basis of his objectives and intentions, and this is accordingly something regarding which the will is altogether free.

The agent who freely eats the poisoned apple actually poisons himself. But it was only the eating that was done freely, not the poisoning. The mobster who freely starts his car—which, unbeknownst to him, has been booby-trapped with a bomb—actually blows himself to smithereens, but certainly does not do so freely. We are only fully in charge of what we *try* to do, whereas what *actually happens* is always something that lies to some extent outside the area of our control. With free decisions we are in full control; with the free actions that result from such decisions the cooperation of nature is needed and things have to go "accordingly to plan." Thus our "degrees of freedom" are limited by the realities of nature: we cannot drive the car sideways. J. G. Fichte accordingly located human freedom in the boundary between the spontaneously active self (the I), and the self-limiting "other" (the non-I), where the creative agency of the former has a significant but limited range of effective control with respect to the latter.

It must be reemphasized, however, that to say that free will consists in the control of decisions and choices on the basis of deliberative thought is not to claim that the thought processes at work here must be totally explicit and conscious—that the mental processing involved proceeds completely at the level of explicit awareness, and that there is no place here for subconscious considerations.

Display 1

THE STRUCTURE OF DELIBERATE ACTION



Note] here marks the termination of an *open* interval.

2. Issues of Revision and Control

Free will in its most fully developed form has three phases, *deliberation, resolution*, and *implementation*, with a temporal structure as sketched in Display 1.

Actual decisions and choices (in contrast to provisional or conditional ones) involve immediate implementation so that once made they are final and preclude a point-of-no-return prior to the decisive reconfirmation that marks the phase-change from deliberation to implementation. A decision or choice can, of course, look to the future: in contingency planning, after all, we often decide upon "what to do if." But any such "decision" is in fact merely a tentative and provisional resolve: implementing it always requires a further activating decision to be made *at the time*.

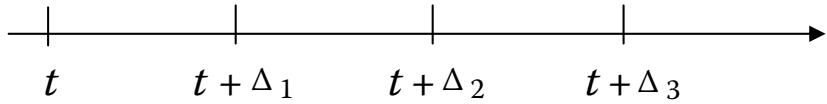
One can no more make tomorrow's decisions today than one can take tomorrow's naps today. Were we able to do so, then those yet unmade decisions would no longer be what (by hypothesis) they are—namely *future* choices and intentions. In matters of choice and decision the will cannot do its work in advance of the fact. Free will requires not only that there be options for choice but that they be kept open until the decisive end. Not only action but veto over acting is involved in free will. It lies in the nature of free agency as such that there is no "point of no return" in advance of the event.

To be sure, in addition to actual volitions, decisions and choices about what to do here-and-now, there are also contingency plans—*provisional* resolutions about what to do when-and-if. All such conditional

decisions and choices are tentative in nature, subject to reconsideration and revision. Decisions can be *contemplated* in advance of the act planned in advance, but they cannot be definitively *made* in advance. Only at the ultimate "point of decision" when that choice becomes an accomplished fact. If indeed free the agent must be able to change his mind and act differently—or not at all.

Even as an action, once performed, cannot be recalled, so an actual decision once made cannot be undone. To be sure, this does not hold for *resolutions*—those so-called preliminary decisions that relate to future implementation. But these are not actual but only tentative decisions, whose realization as such—that is, as decisions proper—comes only when the time of implementation is at hand.

Consider the time sequence



And now suppose the following:

(0) At t the agent resolves (forms the act-intention) to pull the trigger at $t + \Delta_1$.
(1) At $t + \Delta_1$ the agent decides to implement his resolve and pulls the trigger.
(2) At $t + \Delta_2$ the bullet hits the victim.
(3) At $t + \Delta_3$ the victim dies.

At each stage something rather different is going on.

- At t we have (by hypothesis) a prospective resolve regarding a future action—a preliminary "decision" that is not definitive because it could, in theory, be rescinded were the agent to change his mind and still needs ratification "when the time comes."
- At $t + \Delta_1$ we have the (at least tacit) decision actually to implement the act-intention previously formed at t.
- At $t + \Delta_2$ and $t + \Delta_3$ we have the (generally—but not inevitably) foreseen and intended results of the act at issue.

The *definitive* decision (in the terminology we here employ) is the one occurring at $t + \Delta_1$ the point where choice and action, decision and implementation come together. Between t and $t + \Delta_1$ circumstances beyond the agent's control may frustrate the t-formed intention and preclude its implementation at $t + \Delta_1$. And between $t + \Delta_1$ and $t + \Delta_3$

an uncooperative world (in the form of a bodyguard) could come between the act and its intended result. Only at $t + \Delta_1$ do intention and action come together in an inseparable union. So it is just here, at the point of decision where the agent is in full control, that the issue of the agent's freedom becomes pivotal.

Particular weight must be given here to the key factor of *ongoing control of outcomes by deliberative (albeit possibly subconscious) thought*. Since it takes little more than a twiddle of the finger to show that thought can move muscles, it would be decidedly perverse of theorists to maintain that "control of thought is through the muscles"[3] rather than the other way around.

On this basis, three paramount conditions prove to be critical for a *free* choice or decision as such:

1. *Agent control.* Productive control by the agent's thought is crucial. And it is crucial that in matters of *choice*—though not necessarily of *action*—the agent is in charge of the outcome.[4]
2. *Deliberative management*. The agent effects his resolutions through (possibly only subconscious) deliberation—that is, on the basis of thought-envisioned considerations grounded in the agent's information together with his values, preferences, and desires. In consequences, the upshot of that choice or decision must hinge on a process of thought proceeding in the agent's mind (*in foro interno*) on the basis of information together with evaluations grounded in the agent's values, preferences, objectives.
3. *Up-to-the-end revisability*. The agent remains in charge of the outcome of the resolution situation at issue at the "point of decision" itself. The state of the world at a previous juncture—the agent's own condition included—is never definitively determinative of the outcome of a free choice or decision.

And so agent control is of the essence with free agency. But what if there is failure here?

In theory there are two ways in which this can happen:

(1) The agent actually is in control, but is totally unaware of it.
(2) The agent believes himself to be in control, but actually is not.

Let us begin with (1).

Unbeknownst to the company commander, the company cook decides to serve the entire mess the same dessert—whatever it be—that this officer chooses for himself when reviewing the day's menu. That

commander's free choice now effectively controls what everyone has for dessert. Still, we cannot say that he freely chooses *their* dessert, because that choice is in fact wholly outside of his intentional range: only the cook's *modus operandi* produces the needed link.

The expression "controlling" or "having control" is equivocal as between "being in control," which our commander indeed is, and deliberately "exercising control," which he does not do. And *this* defect of control means that while we can say that this man freely chooses his own dessert, he does not thereby freely choose that of the rest, because, strictly speaking, he does not actually choose this at all. And in matters of free will it is the *experience* rather than the possession of control that is critical.

So much for (1). Let us now turn to (2).

A typical case here might be that of the hired assassin who is convinced that his stab to the heart killed his victim, when what actually did the killing was the poisoned dart shot a bit sooner by a back-up who had also been deployed, unbeknownst to our assassin. We can say that he freely *attempted* to kill the victim, but we cannot drop that qualification. After all, we cannot in the circumstances say that he killed the victim at all. All that we can really say is that what he (freely) did—namely stabbed the victim—would have killed him had he not already been dead. Here the flaw is one of causality and it suffices to block a stronger attribution of agency.

And so, the lesson here is that both productivity and intentionality are essential to free agency in the fullest sense.

3. The Prospect of Subconscious Deliberation

For present purposes the distinction between what is unconscious and what is subconscious is crucial. Granted, neither is a matter of what is actually conscious but the difference is critical. For what you subconsciously believe or intend or desire is still something that, at some level of obscurity, you do actually believe or intend or desire. But whatever lies in the realm of the altogether unconscious has no cognitive standing at all: it does not lie at the outer fringes of awareness, but rather has no linkage to consciousness whatsoever—you cannot raise it to explicitness because you cannot connect with it at all.

And many things we do are determined by entirely unconscious biological processes (e.g., sneezing). Here the issue of free will does not come into it. But others are under the control of our thought (e.g.,

greeting someone) even though this may proceed subconsciously, without explicit thought or deliberation. Here free will becomes relevant.[5]

Clearly, not all of our thought-business is conducted at the conscious level: there is also the very real phenomenon of subconscious thinking. But can an agent possibly be held responsible for a choice made subconsciously? Assuredly so—disapprovingly when, say, that motivation is (subconsciously) malign, or approvingly when, say, the choice is made in line with a benignly formed habit.

It is simply not the case that free acts must always be done consciously, wittingly, and deliberately. For example, whenever I act out of a deliberately developed habit—say, in brushing my teeth in the morning—I act freely to all intents and purposes. On the other hand, when I sneeze or yawn or have a facial tic, I exhibit behavior that does not constitute free action since thought processes are not in control—either consciously or unconsciously.

The idea that *only* consciously deliberated choices ever count as free is very questionable. For it would appear that we constantly make free choices without conscious deliberation: from habit, from inclination, from whims of the moment. I check the time when I arise in the morning. I say "Good morning" to a passerby, I shade my eyes when the sun emerges from a cloud, I unfold the morning paper and proceed to read it, I honk my horn at the person who cuts me off in traffic. All of these are free actions. But not one of them involved any conscious deliberation on my part. In writing and speaking I continually perform seemingly free actions to which I give no explicit thought.[6]

But can there actually be subconscious intention, deliberation, decision, and choice. Why on earth not? In principle, anything the mind can do consciously it can do subconsciously as well. The mental processes that an agent can, when needed, bring into the light of conscious awareness, he can do subconsciously as well, without giving the matter much explicit thought.

And so, all sorts of things an agent does freely he can manage to do subconsciously, without explicit attention and awareness. When you enter the room, you can turn on the light—freely, but yet unthinkingly. When you write your signature, you produce those letters freely but without explicit attention. When you drive home from the office along a familiar route, you make all parts of the trip freely but automatically without explicit attention. When you answer the doorbell, you do it freely, but without planning or deliberation. All those causes of action involve intelligible pieces among alternatives, all of which are made

freely, but yet subconsciously, without overt deliberate attention. No doubt, free agency calls for the possibility of overt, alternative, and deliberative decision. But it certainly does not always require the actual deployment of this capacity.

Display 3

MODALITIES OF FREE AGENCY

A. An agent's actions are either *self-determined*, or *imposed* as the involuntary product of external factors (*force majeure*, hypnosis, drugs, etc.)

B. An agent's self-determined actions can be either *autonomous* (in being motivated by the agent's own wishes, needs, wants, dispositions, aims, values), or *constrained* (through the imposition of someone else's needs, goals, wants, desires, aims, etc.)

C. An agent's autonomous motivations can be either agent-inaugurated and *spontaneous* or *induced* through the actions of others manipulated by those, be it paternalistically for agent-beneficial reasons, or heteronomously for reasons independent of the agent's own benefit or best interests.

Subconsciously performed free action is decidedly possible. When you write your signature, you produce the letters of your name freely, but without giving the matter the slightest thought. And the same goes when you recite a poem—you utter the words freely. But there is no conscious attention to it, let alone deliberation about it. And there are many other examples of choices made (and actions performed) freely and yet without any conscious attention or deliberation, including:

- Saying "Hello!" when you answer the telephone.
- Crossing the T when writing "cat."
- Taking the menu from the hostess upon being seated at a restaurant.

A person's day is filled with such spontaneous free actions performed routinely in the absence of any explicit attention or deliberation.

The quintessential and most developed form of free agency doubtless calls for deliberative decision. But this is not true of all of its versions. For it is simply not the case that free acts must always be done consciously, wittingly, and deliberately. For example, whenever I act out of a deliberately developed habit—say, in brushing my teeth in the morning—I act freely to all intents and purposes. On the other hand, when I sneeze or yawn or have a facial tic, I exhibit behavior that does not constitute free action since thought processes are not in one's control—either consciously or subconsciously.

The crux of free agency is the factor of autonomous determination by an agent's thought in the absence of any undue agent-external control. But whether that control is exercised deliberately and consciously or subconsciously and without explicit deliberation is ultimately irrelevant for metaphysical freedom. In the normal course of things, when someone laughs at a joke, they do so freely, despite there being no deliberation or decision. (But note the essential role of mind—if the joke is told in a language the agent does not understand, he is not going to laugh.)

After all, there must be such unconscious (or subconscious) free choice if there are to be any free choices at all. For consider some paradigm case of willing and deliberate choice. If that choice is to be the result of a process of deliberation—of considering and weighing reasons pro and con—then the reasonings indeed must, like all reasonings, be based on accepted premises. But the willing acceptance of a premise is itself an act, and in the circumstances one that is free. And in this case we would now be embarked on a vitiating regress of prior deliberated acceptance.

Regarded in this perspective, the issue of metaphysical free will involves a sequence of three questions, namely: Does the outcome of the agent's choice-resolution indispensably depend upon:

- the agent's *thought*—be it conscious or subconscious?
- the agent's *conscious thought*?
- the agent's *explicit deliberation*?

If the answer to the first question is No, then metaphysical free will is not in prospect. If the outcome of an agent's choices are determined entirely by factors outside his thought-processes, then freedom of the will is out of the picture. However, when the answer is Yes, there are, overall, three levels of free will, depending on the overall answer profile:

1.	Yes	No	No
2.	Yes	Yes	No
3.	Yes	Yes	Yes

Accordingly, there are three levels or modes of metaphysical freedom: type 1 (minimal), type 2 (intermediate), and type 3 (maximal). It is the third level of deliberative freedom that usually stands in the forefront in these discussions. After all, consciously deliberated decisions are the most salient, the most striking, and the most dramatic instances of free will at work. But they are not the only ones!

All this, of course, pertains to metaphysical freedom: moral freedom raises further issues.

Throughout matters of free will it must be the agent's thought that—be it conscious or subconscious—controls his choices. But if those thoughts themselves are produced by manipulative operations wholly outside the agent's control, then, of course, *moral* freedom is out. There is, however, no reason to think that this is something that will generally—let alone always—happen.

Granted, the quintessential instance of a free action is that of the person who explicitly and consciously decides to do something in advance and then proceeds, with that decision in mind, to perform the act when the time comes. Nevertheless, unconsciously or subconsciously performed free action is decidedly possible. When you write your signature, you produce the letters of your name freely, but without giving the matter the slightest thought. And the same is true when you recite a poem—you utter the words freely. But there is no conscious attention to, let alone overt deliberation about it.

After all, there must be such subconscious free choice if there are to be any free choices at all. For consider some paradigm case of willing and deliberate choice. If that choice is to be the result of a process of deliberation—of considering and weighing reasons pro and con—then the reasonings indeed must, like all reasonings, be based on accepted premises. But *the willing acceptance of a premise* is itself an act of sorts, and in the circumstances one that is free. And in this case we would now be embarked on a vitiating regress of prior deliberated acceptance.

4. The Counterfactual Dimension: "Could Have Done Otherwise"

In one important respect, chance and choice are in the same boat: both are bound up with the idea that matters can eventuate differently. In this regard the free will theorist does not stand alone—the quantum physicist is very much on his side, given his contention that the uranium atom that disintegrated after ten hours of observation could have done so sooner, or later.

There is, however, one important difference. In matters of chance things can eventuate differently even when there is no difference on the conditions and circumstances that obtain. But with choice and decision one will generally need a rider of the format: *if something-or-other had*

been different. That is, the agent could have chosen or decided differently if something about the conditions and circumstances were to warrant it—and thereby if the course of his deliberations had been different. Choice and decision are, in this regard, rational processes—unlike the purely fortuitous processes of pure chance. Rational agents standardly decide for reasons—even if often poor ones.

With free choice and decision the agent is in charge of the outcome through his thoughts. The crux of the matter is that the agent could and would have chosen or decided differently IF: that is (1) if he had thought that other options were available, and/or (2) if he had evaluated differently the options he took to be available. Consider contentions of the following format:

- If John had thought that Mary had died last year, he would not have decided to propose to her today.
- If Mary had believed that John was a serial wife-poisoner, she would not have accepted his marriage proposal.
- If John had detested the taste of bacon, he would not have eaten that BLT sandwich with such great relish.

Few contentions are more plausible than these, and it is just this sort of iffyness that is at issue with an agent's change of mind as new information comes to light.

What we have going here is a sequence of the following format:

- He could and would have decided differently if the course of his deliberations had been duly different.
- He could and would have tried to proceed differently if he had decided matters differently.

To be sure, it does not automatically follow here that he could have *acted* differently if he had tried to proceed differently. For in many circumstances it will transpire that even if an agent tries to proceed differently he might not have been able to do so—as with trying to leave the locked room or trying to find a lost key. (And note that the inability to do otherwise does not get the agent "off the hook" of moral reprehension in those cases where he does not even try.)

It needs to be acknowledged that this agent-deterministic view of the matter takes the line of a classical compatibilism, which sees free choice as involving capacity or power of choosing otherwise. This perspective runs counter to the so-called "new compatibilism" of various recent writers who deny that "could have done otherwise" and

alternative possibilities are needed for free will. However, two deliberative moves can neutralize the conflict at issue. The first is the distinction as regards "doing otherwise" between *choosing* and *acting*. (Think once more of John Locke's locked door.) The second turns on the construal of that possibilistic "could have" as short for "would have if . . ." where the relevant if conditions do not outrun the bounds of plausibility.

Thus, it can in some circumstances make perfectly good sense to say:

> Even with those selfsame decisions that *X* actually made, the course of events could have been different [if circumstances outside his control had been duly different].

But, by contrast, it makes little sense to say:

- Even given that selfsame course of deliberation, the agent could have decided/chosen differently.
- Even with that self-same decision/choice of respecting his course of action, the agent could have endeavored to act differently.

However, with free actions the "could have done otherwise" of free will must be construed as "would have done otherwise IF - - -" where that if-correlative condition has to relate to some facet of the agent's beliefs or decisions. With free actions the belief/desire conditions at work in the agent's deliberation play a decisive role, and different outcomes require different conditions in this regard.

And so, at least since G. E. Moore[7] the hypothetical idea of "might/could have done otherwise" has figured prominently in the forefront of deliberations about free will as a necessary (albeit not sufficient) condition. And yet there are problems here. For that Moorean "could have *done* otherwise" requirement is problematic. After all, free will is perfectly compatible with outcomes inevitably as per John Locke's example of the man who freely decides to stay in a room with blocked exits. The ultimate *outcome* of our decisions and actions is all too often something beyond our powers to determine. We may propose here, but Nature disposes.

Suppose that I deliberate about whether to go to the theater or read a book, decide (freely) to go to the theater, and thereupon proceed to do so. Now consider the following set of counterfactual conditionals:

If I had decided differently, then—

(1) *I could have* acted differently
(2) *I would have* acted differently

(3) *I would probably have* acted differently
(4) *I would have tried* to act differently

Here (1) and (2) seem plausible, but are not actually true—with substantial damage to Moore's position. For in leaving home for the theater I might have tripped and twisted my ankle, with the upshot of having to stay home and read a book. By an unhappy ruling of fate, matters could have so eventuated that I could not have acted differently. On the other hand, (3) seems quite safe since we generally act in line with our decisions. And (4) is even safer yet—indeed virtually inevitable. There is little question that the outcome of our deliberations guide our actions—or at least what it is that we *try* to do.

In this light consider the following sequence:

- He would have done otherwise if he had so chosen/decided.
- He would have chosen/decided otherwise if he had been so minded and so wished.
- He would have wished and been minded otherwise if the circumstances had been duly different.

With the first two items we have conditions over which the agent has full and entire control. But with the third item the agent has lost control unless we add "and he knew about this." With free decision, just exactly this entry into an agent's thought is unavoidable with a counterfactual regress of this sort. When matters outrun the reach of the agent's mind, his freedom vanishes.

The prospect of mind-initiative in the setting of mind-body coordination defuses any attempt to evade moral responsibility through contention on the order of "my *X* made me do it" with *X* standing for some aspect of one's biophysical heritage or formative circumstances. To protest (for example) that "My genes made me do it" would be folly. Those genes—that biophysical make-up, those environmental or educational formative circumstances, and the like—were in place well before the act, and they did nothing to impose that act upon you *ab extra*. For those formative conditions are not external to yourself. On the contrary, they are exactly what constitutes and defines you. When what you do roots in you—in what your make-up, your circumstances, your nature and autonomous motivation have made of you—then the responsibility for what is done is inalienably yours.

Only insofar as an agent's acts are the product of factors operative outside the scope of his own operations is an agent's moral responsibility

mitigated. Any such self-exculpation as "My genes made me do it" is unraveled by the force of that initial "my."[8] An agent's biophysical make-up and course of experience do not control his decisions and actions; it is he himself who controls them with his make-up and experiential functions as part of self. Those factors of self-definition are not functions imposed upon him from without but constitutive features of himself as the individual he is.

5. Problem Cases: Machines and Lunatics

The very idea of free will poses some puzzle cases. Think, for example, of an agent who voluntarily renders his own will impotent, someone who is unfree as the result of a free decision (say, by tying himself to the mast like Ulysses or by enlisting in the French Foreign Legion). If I freely subject myself to your authority and so follow your command, do I act freely or not? And when I freely decide to delegate a decision and you freely agree to accept and implement the delegation, then in effect we both bear responsibility for the result. (By the usual ground-rules, when there is reprehension we *both will bear it fully*, while if there is credit we must *divide it* according to the circumstances of the case.)

But what if I delegate a decision to a mechanism—a coin toss, say—which after all can sometimes be the proper and reasonable thing to do? Do I then decide freely? Yes, of course. For the decision actually to implement the result and stand by the delegate-provided resolution is unavoidably present as a free decision. In adopting and implementing the resolution of a putative delegation we effectively ratify it and make it our own.

So—can lunatics act freely? There can be little question about their ability to do so in the metaphysical (productive) sense of the term. They can use thought to guide action—however inappropriately. But moral freedom is something else again. The sociopath who is constitutionally unable to take the interests of others into account in his deliberations may very well be metaphysically free. But by hypothesis he is not morally a free agent. It is not he but his malady that determines outcomes. Thanks to that postulated "constitutional inability" to deliberate in the morally requisite way, the sociopath who has a kind of color blindness to ethically requisite considerations—a birth defect of normative blindness, as it were—is simply outside the moral pale. Here, as elsewhere, conceptual accuracy requires distinctions. For

there is, on the one hand, responsibility for his acts, which is—even in the moral sense of the term—something that rests with the agent. But under the circumstances this responsibility will not automatically transmute into culpability because something untoward—the agent's abnormality—stands in the way.

A person may indeed be deflected by psychic aberrations—ranging in intensity along a scale of abnormality from pique and annoyance through courage, from rage and fury to outright lunacy and madness—from reaching a resolution that would normally and ordinarily be expected of her. Figuratively speaking, we might—and often do—say that such a person is not himself, resorting to the *moral fiction* (on analogy with such *legal fictions* as that persons missing for seven years are dead) that madness is the takeover of an individual's mind by an alien potency—historically first viewed as a wicked demon taking "possession" of the individual, though nowadays viewed rather as an illness. In this way agent-responsibility becomes sidelined, and moral freedom becomes removed in a way that lets our generous instincts trump the uncomfortable realities.

Notes

1. See Earman (1986).
2. As Augustine saw it, God's foreknowledge does not *abrogate* freedom but simply *anticipates* it (St. Augustine, *De libero arbitrio*, Book III, chapter iii). And Leibniz took much the same line in his *Theodicy*.
3. Bain (1868), Bk IV, Chap iii.
4. On the issue of agent control and its ramifications see Oppenheim (1961) and Rescher (1969).
5. Note that some actions can be produced either way. A normal yawn is physiologically automatic, but the stage-actor's yawn is debatable.
6. On the language use as a prime instance of free agency see G. M. Edelman (1989).
7. See Moore (1912).
8. On these issues see Murphy and Brown (2007).

4

Some Fallacies Regarding Free Will

Synopsis

(1) The Zenonic Fallacy regarding freedom of the will is widely committed. (2) Here, the important distinction between predetermination *and* precedence determination *must be heeded with due care. (3) The causal determination of action does not of itself impede freedom of the will. (4) Precedence determination does not remove causality from the picture, but calls for a characteristic process of* causal compression. *(5) Against productivity is not at odds with a Principle of Causality but means that this has to be conceptualized in a somewhat complex way. The key lesson that emerges is that an adequate theory of free will can and must be developed on a naturalistic basis to able to function within the boundaries of scientific rationality.*

1. The Zenonic Fallacy

Some philosophers envision a regressively ancestral determinism where any causally determined action is in turn determined by an earlier one until at least the action is determined by circumstances that pre-exist the agent and thereby obviously fail to be under his control.[1] But there is a big problem here. For deliberations regarding free will are all too often vitiated by what one might call the Zenonic Fallacy. It emerges in the following line of reasoning:

> If every action is determinately fixed in place by the laws of nature and temporally antecedent events, then the chain of causality can be carried back into the distant past.

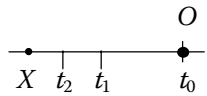
This Zenonic Fallacy is exemplified in the reasoning that Daniel Dennett formulates in the following terms:

> If determinism is true, then our every deed and decision is the inexorable outcome, it seems, of the sum of physical forces acting at the

> moment; which in turn is the inexorable outcome of the forces acting an instant before, *and so on to the beginning of time* . . . . [Thus]—If determinism is true, then our acts are the consequences of the laws of nature and events in the remote past. But it is not up to us what went on before we were born, and neither is it up to us what the laws of nature are. Therefore the consequences of these things (including our present acts) are not up to us.[2]

It is exactly in this italicized transit from "and so on" to "the beginning of time" that constitutes what I shall call the Zenonic Fallacy. And fallacy it is, because it overlooks the prospect of backwards convergence, drawing ever closer to a fixed prior terminus, but never passing it.[3]

After all, it is exactly in this transit from "and so on" to "the beginning of time" that the Zenonic Fallacy consists. For the reasoning at issue overlooks the prospect of backwards *convergence* as illustrated in the following diagram:



Assume an occurrence *O* at t_0—the result, so we suppose, of a free decision at *X,* and suppose a line sequence of t_i with t_{i+1} standing halfway between t_i. And now consider the following situation. Everything at *O* can be explained causally via events during the interval $t_1 - t_0$ and everything at t_1 can be explained causally via events during the internal $t_2 - t_1$, and so on *ad infinitum* along an unendingly compressed claim of causation. So *every* event from *X* to *O* can in fact be explained causally. But there is now no obstacle to the prospect that *nothing* in this chain can be explained causally via events occurring *antecedently* to *X*, the juncture at which a free decision occurs. And this sort of causal compression is fatal to any "and-so-on" retrogression into the distant past.

So it is simply false that because our present acts are causal consequences of what goes before they must arise from the state of things in the distant past—matters over which we obviously have no control, thus leaving no room for free will.[4] The key point here is that a compressive backwards convergence can finalize retrogression. Overlooking this key point is the heart and core of the Zenonic Fallacy.

Zeno's notorious paradox of Achilles and the Tortoise led to the conclusion that even an infinite number of steps forward cannot cover a small distance. The Zenonic Fallacy has it that an infinite number of backwards steps must cover a great distance. And this latter argument

overlooks the fact that, thanks to convergence, an infinity of summands can yield a finite sum, provided merely that the steps get ever shorter. In Zeno's argument, Achilles never catches the tortoise because his progress must go on and on before the endpoint is reached. In the present reasoning explanation will never reach an initiating choice-point because the regress goes on and on ever further. But in both cases alike the idea of a convergence that terminates the infinite process at issue after a finite timespan is simply ignored. The analysis of Zeno's paradox carries exactly this lesson: An infinite succession of steps need not cover an infinite distance. So, once it is granted that, even if a cause must precede its effect, nevertheless there is no specific timespan, however small, by which it need do so, the causal regression argument against free will loses all of its traction. A causal determinism of actions is then perfectly compatible with a causal freedom with respect to decisions and choices.

Surprisingly, it seems somehow to have eluded numerous theorists that it is perfectly possible to have a causal chain tracing back *ad infinitum*, but nevertheless converging on a point of closure only a finite time in the past. For while every event after the "point of decision" *X* can be given its causal explanation, nevertheless nothing about the situation prior to *X* is decisive one way or another with regard to *X*-subsequent events. With free decisions, it will, accordingly, not be law-determinately predictable antecedently to *X* what will happen subsequently. With *X* as the point of decision, we have it that: *The results that issue from a genuinely free decision just are not and cannot be the causally inevitable product of some cluster of choice-antecedent events*.

Accordingly, the Principle of Causality can remain intact in the face of free agency. Events are always predictable from *some* prior world-state, but certainly not in a way that can be traced far back into the past; within finite timespans there is room for an unending regress of event explanations. The Principle of Causality continues in operation with the effect that every occurrence in the sequence of nature's processual developments would be causally explicable with reference to *some* prior events. But under the here-envisioned conditions, the causal explanation of our actions does nothing to impede the prospect of their origination in acts of free will because every act consequent upon a free decision can in principle be explained by events intermediate between that decision and the commencement of the act.

Such a perspective leaves the Principle of Causality wholly compatible with freedom because all those causal consequences of the act

remain causally explicable, while nevertheless the entire series is of a different order.

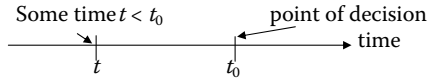
Ever since the ancient Academic Carneades (214–129 BC) first tried to reconcile free will with universal causality, there has loomed the question of how to fit psychically free agency into a framework of physical causality. The present approach affords a clear-cut resolution to this issue. For it emplaces free agency in a setting that does not suspend causality but envisions a process of "causal compression" that emplaces the regress of causes into a succession of ever shorter timespans converging backwards in time to a point of decision.

But what about that free decision itself? How can one reasonably avert seeing it as itself constituting a causality predictable event? If the Law of Causality holds, will not decisions-resolutions themselves have to be seen as predetermined?

2. Averting Predetermination (Contrasting Predetermination With Precedence Determination)

To say that something is *causally predetermined* as of some prior time is to commit oneself to the claim that this is going to happen irrespective of what anyone may choose or decide to do. By contrast, to ascribe a decision to someone's free will is to impute to this individual a capacity to determine whether the outcome at issue is or is not to occur. The two positions are obviously incompatible. Predetermination means that the outcome becomes a foregone conclusion at some antecedent time: the entire matter becomes settled in advance of the fact. And this is indeed incompatible with free will because it deprives the agent of the power to change his mind. There is some time in advance of the point of decision when the whole matter becomes settled. *Free will is thus inconsistent with a decision's predetermination* in advance of the fact. It precludes there being a time antecedent to the "point of decision" when that outcome becomes a foregone conclusion and the agent is deprived of a possible change of mind. With genuine freedom the "point of decision" that resolves a choice only then becomes fixed when one reaches a point of no return, when "the die is cast" with respect to the outcome and the matter becomes irrevocable.

There is, however, a crucially important distinction between *predetermination* and what might be called *precedence determination*. This crucial difference is illustrated by the following diagram:



With *predetermination* what happens at t_0 is determined by (i.e., law-deducible from) that which happens at some earlier time *t*. Some earlier state of affairs renders what occurs at decision-time t_0 causally inevitable. Already at this earlier time the decision becomes settled: a foregone conclusion that is reached in advance of the fact. However, with *precedence determination* what happens at t_0 is also determined by what goes before—but only by *everything* that happens from some earlier time *t* up to but not including t_0.[5]

So there need be *no antecedent interest of inevitability* with precedence determination. Only *the entire course* of what occurs antecedently determines the outcome. An occurrence at time t_0 is *precedence-determined* iff its occurrence at that time follows from the relevant laws of nature plus the state of things occurring at *every time* during the interval from $t_0 - \Delta$ to t_0 for some $\Delta > 0$. For predetermination, one single prior state-description suffices: for precedence determination, the entire manifold of state-descriptions during a final run-up of states is required. (It is the "end-game" that is crucial.) Both alike are modes of determination by earlier history. But the former calls for predictability as of some antecedent time, whereas the latter involves no such thing. The claim to precedence determination *requires an infinite amount of input-information,* which is, of course, never available. What we thus have in this latter case is a mode of antecedence determination that does not give rise to predictability but is in fact incompatible with it. Precedence determination can thus coexist with unpredictability as standardly conceived.

Just exactly such precedence determination can and should be contemplated in relation to free decisions and choices: a determination by the concluding phase of the course of the agent's deliberation that issues in the decision or choice at issue. For the events that constitute a course of deliberation antecedent to a decision or choice here so function as to determine the outcome, *it is only the end-game—the final, concluding phase—that is decisive*. Only the entire course of the agent's thinking as of *some* earlier point up to, *but not including,* the point of decision suffices to settle the issue. The outcome is never settled in advance—it isn't over "until the fat lady sings." And

it should be clear that this sort of precedence determination geared to the unfolding course of deliberation in its final phase is nowise at odds with freedom of the will.

Predetermination has it that:

> There is some time prior to the (so-called) point of decision when the result of that decision becomes a foregone conclusion.

Accordingly, a doctrine of free will that proposes to deny such predetermination will have it that:

> At no time prior to the point of decision will the outcome of the decision be a foregone conclusion: none of the different possible outcomes can be definitively excluded at any time prior to that point. Any and every preceding point of time allows for the prospect of subsequent developments that deflect the outcome from what it otherwise would be.

A critical point of any doctrine of free will is the idea that "it's never over until it's over"—the outcome of a decision is never settled as fact until "all returns are in" that is, until the moment of decision itself. And while this principle is also compatible with probabilism and indeterminism, what matters for present purposes is that it allows freedom to be reconciled with a determinism of sorts—not, to be sure, predeterminism, but what we here characterize as precedence determinism.

This circumstance is crucial for a version of freedom, which has it that an issue of choice is definitely settled only when the choice or decision is made as an actually accomplished fact; until then room is always open for a change of mind. The outcome of an authentically free decision is never a foregone conclusion in advance of the fact. And precedence determination allows us to take exactly this line. To be sure, the precedence determination of decisions and choices is indeed a determinism of sorts. For it indeed maintains that whenever the agent's course of deliberation is the same up to (but not including) that time of decision is fixed then the upshot is thereby determined and only one outcome is possible. And this means that if as of some point-of-decision preceding time *the closing phase of deliberation up to the point* of decision itself unfolds in exactly the same way in two cases, then the outcome of that decision process will have to be the same: identical end-game deliberations must end in identical results. So on this perspective the outcome of a choice or decision is predetermined

alright, but only by its closing phase. Only if his deliberations conclude differently could the agent have decided otherwise. Determination occurs, but only at the point of resolution itself. And at no time prior to "the bitter end" of ultimate resolution does that end-game itself become something fixed. So, for-sure prediction is infeasible, and what we have is *precedence-determination without predetermination and predictability.* And when determination by motives is combined with precedence determinism in the manner just described, it becomes evident that there is no real obstacle to a "compatibilism" that combines determination and free will.

3. Causal Problems

A not uncommon objection to free will runs as follows:

> If all events are explicable in the order of natural causality, then so are all of those supposedly free decisions of agents. This means that the Law of Causality leaves no room for agent productivity and thus no room for free will.

To meet this line of argumentation one must draw some rather subtle distinctions. The first and most crucial of these is that between two sorts of occurrences, namely events and eventuations. Events are occurrences that form part of nature processuality and transpire on the world's spatio-temporal stage. So they occur over time: they have a finite lifespan, and their time of existence always occupies a two-sidedly open interval of time.

Eventuations, by contrast, are not parts of nature's processuality but terminating points within it. They are temporally punctiform and lack duration. They mark the beginnings and endings of events.

Now all human acts (all actions and activities) are event-like. They occupy time. But the junctures of resolution that mark the completion of a process of choice of decision are not events. Such completions are not actually processual doings, but rather are mere junctures of passage—transitions that mark the beginnings and endings of events. Looking for something is an activity, but actually finding it is not. (There is no present continuous here. One can be engaged in looking but not in finding.) Listening to someone is an activity, but hearing what they say is not. Activities are events, terminations and completions are not. The running of a race is an event (as are its various parts, such as running the first half of the race). However, finishing the race is an eventuation. Such eventuations are endings or culminations. One can

ask "How long did he take him to run the race?" but not "How long did he take to start the race?" And even as the race ends when it is won (or lost), so the task ends exactly at the moment when it is completed (or abandoned). Finishing is thus an eventuation and, accordingly, the finishing-point of a race, instead of being the last instant of the race—is the first instant at which the race is no longer in progress. And just this is the case with the decisions and choices that terminates a course of deliberations.

Eventuations, so understood, are not parts of nature's processual flow, since parts of processes are always processes themselves. Rather, eventuations—their beginnings and endings—belong to the machinery of conceptualization that minds impose on nature: instrumentalities of descriptive convenience that do not correspond to anything enjoying independent existence in the real world. Like the North Pole or the Equator, they are not real items existing physically in nature, but rather thought instrumentalities projected into reality by minds proceeding in the interests of description and examination.

While deliberating about whether or not to take an umbrella is indeed a process, the actual ultimate decision itself is not. Deliberating—the process of making a decision—is indeed just that, a process. But this deciding's resolution itself and the "act of will" it represents is an arrival rather than a transit, a finish or completion rather than a component of the race. The deliberation that issues in a decision is a temporal process but the decision that is its culminating termination is effectively instantaneous. To reemphasize: all such terminations of a process are not themselves processes: they represent eventuations rather than events. And just this is what a decision or choice (an "act of will") in fact is, the culmination of a deliberative process—a completion rather than a performance: an eventuation rather than an event. And as such they are not events but eventuations, which as such stand apart from the flow of historical causality—unlike the deliberations they terminate.

Regarding as an eventuation, a "point of decision" is not an observable process but a theoretical entity—an artifact of theorizing rather than the target of an observation. What is at issue is an "inference to the best-available systematization" of our thought and experience on the issues, rather than an observable item as such. Experiencing a free decision is not like experiencing a toothache, but rather having a course of experience whose overall structure invites—nay, virtually

demands—the postulation of an "act of decision" if we are to make sense of it overall.

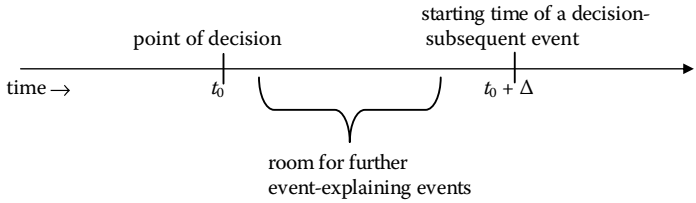
Deliberations, so regarded, are seen as events—as processes that occur over open-ended interactions of time; but the decisions in which lay eventuation are just that—mere evaluations. And here the situation is as per Display 1. As this display shows, there can always be an interval of time between a decision and any subsequent action to accommodate intervening events to serve as causal explainers of that decision-consequent action. The timing always leaves room for events with reference to what that action can be explained. *Since there is no such thing as a next time subsequent to a point of decision, there will always be room for squeezing in further events before any particular decision-subsequent event.* The prospect of determination by events is thus ever-present. And just this is critical for the present positions regarding the causal explainability of actions. And analogously, there simply is no first, decision-succeeding event that excludes the prospect of an occurrence-explaining prior event. And just this is critical for the present positions regarding the causal explainability of actions.

On this perspective, a free decision inaugurates a series of events, each of which is fully explicable and determinate in the order of natural causality. But this is something that is true of all those decision-subsequent events, and does not hold for that free decision itself.

Freedom of decision accordingly does not impede causal explicability. However, what one has in the wake of a free decision is a phenomenon that might be characterized as "causal compression." Every event that ensues from that decision can be accounted for causally—but only with reference to occurrences during the immediately preceding but

Display 1

TIMING ISSUES



NOTE: There is no next point after a given point and the starting point of *subsequent open interval*.

decision-subsequent timespan, whose duration converges to zero as the point of decision is approached.

In sum: once a due distinction is drawn between events and eventuations, all actions (as events) can be accepted as causally explicable in terms of what precedes without injury to the prospect of volitional freedom. Free will becomes reconciled to the causal explicability of actions.

4. Choices and Decisions are Subject to Causal Compression

The presently envisioned harmonization of free will with nature's causality is predicated on deploying some conceptions of process philosophy, specifically the distinction between a natural event, which is always a process that takes some nontrivial period of time, and a process boundary—a beginning or ending—that is instantaneous. As such, that terminus does not itself constitute a member of the natural order of events (a natural phenomenon) but rather is a thought-imposed projection, which, while convenient for conceptualizing and describing reality, is really not a part of it. On this basis, a free decision inaugurates a series of events, each of which is fully explicable and determinate in the order of natural causality. But this is something that is true only of all those decision-subsequent events, and does not hold for that free decision itself.

The causal flux of nature's processes knows no instantaneous occurrences. As Zeno's Paradoxes indicate, these arise under the abstractive power of minds, so that such instants (and eventuations with them) are *entia rationis*: conceptual thought-items rather than components of nature's impersonal processuality.[6] As the thirteenth-century English Schoolman Robert Grosseteste already argued, free decisions can themselves dispense with *any* sort of efficiently causal determination because such decisions themselves function as prime or initiating causes. (However, he argued this on the strange-seeming basis that even an instantaneously existent angel can make free decisions.)[7]

Choices and decision are preliminaries to and perhaps are determinants of actions, but actions they themselves are not. Instead, those so-called "acts of choice or decision" belong to a category distinct and disjoint from that of actions as such. They are terminating eventuations (of deliberation) and commencing eventuations (of action) without themselves being constituent comportments of any *course of action* of ours. They energize to action without themselves being actions that we perform. And so, as some theorists see it, the actual resolution of

a choice or decision is something at once so basic and so ephemeral that it can only be *experienced* and not *described* in words.[8]

The laws of nature govern events—duration-possessing occurrences in nature. However, choices and decisions, being instantaneous eventuations, cannot be represented (be it by way of explanation or prediction) as the lawfully determined causal product of previous events. For an act of free will—a choice or decision (unlike the actions that follow in consequence)—is not itself part of reality's chain of natural events because *as an eventuation* it stands above and outside this sequence of events. Being eventuations rather than events, our choices and decisions—unlike our actions—are not encompassed by the order of natural causality but remain above and beyond it. No set of events antecedent to that decision render its outcome lawfully inevitable in the causal order—notwithstanding the fact that every *event* is causally explicable—human actions included.

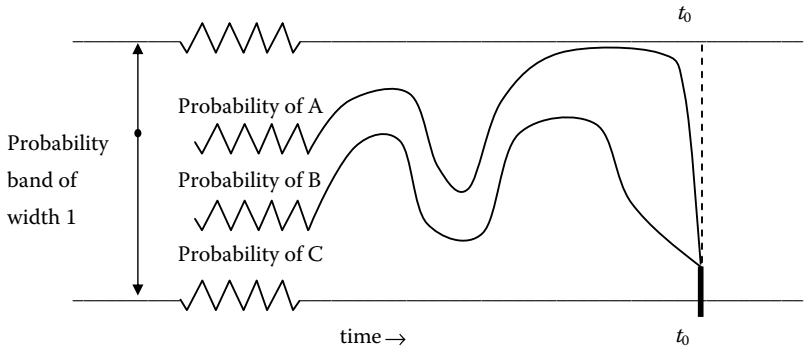
In sum: once we duly distinguish events from eventuations we can regard all action (as events) as developmentally explicable in terms of what precedes without any creative obstacle for freedom of the will. Free will becomes reconciled to the causal explicability of actions. However, what one has in the wake of a free decision is a phenomenon that might be characterized as *causal compression*. Every event that ensues from that decision can be accounted for causally—but only with reference to occurrences during the immediately preceding but decision-subsequent timespan, whose duration converges to zero as the point of decision is approached.

The situation of a free choice among alternatives is thus associated with the following sort of picture regarding the situation at issue. Consider, by way of example, a course of deliberation for deciding among three alternatives—*A*, *B*, *C*—with the decision ultimately arrived at in favor of *C* at time t_0, the "point of decision." At every time t before t_0 there are three possible outcomes, *A*, *B*, and *C,* whose probabilities at any given time prior to t_0 show a band of width 1 overall, as per Display 3.

Throughout the course of deliberation these probabilities can wobble across the band, but in the end they must converge in a way that at t_{01} gives the whole probability to one outcome alone. But at any time prior to t_0 there is a nonzero probability that any of the three outcomes will result—at no anterior time is the outcome a foregone conclusion. The endgame is never definitively settled until the end is reached: only at the very end (at t_0) is there a "probability collapse" into 1's and 0's. Until the issue is "fully decided," there is a nonzero probability of the agent's

Display 3

DELIBERATING AND PROBABILITY: AN EXAMPLE



making a choice different from the one that ultimately eventuates. As the "point of decision" is reached, it becomes more and more likely how the issue will resolve itself. But until "all returns are in" there are no categorical guarantees. At no time before that point of decision is there a "point of no return" where the resolution becomes a foregone conclusion. On this basis, it is just not possible without *total information up to the very point of decision* to say definitively what the outcome will be: before that point no possible outcome has a realization-probability of 1.

This is how precedence determination (rather than predetermination) becomes the crucial factor. So once again a distinction comes upon the scene to save the day. The objection in view is fallacious because it overlooks the crucial distinction between the two very different modes of "determination by what precedes" represented respectively by predetermination and precedence-determination of the sort just described.

To be sure, it is not that the outcomes of free decisions are not predictable at all, but rather that they are so only in a probabilistic manner. In this respect free will is much like the world's stochastic processes, or, to speak metaphorically, chance is Nature's distinctive way of exercising its nondeliberative free will. There is an important difference, however. The probability of a heavy transuranic atom's decaying in the next second is a constant over time. But while such constancy is fairly typical in Nature, this sort of thing will certainly not be so with the outcome probability in matters of decisive deliberation—as Display 2 clearly indicates. They need not be constant, though they must be continuous.[9]

There are things that, as a matter of principle, can be known for certain only with the wisdom of hindsight, and where all that can ever be ascertained in advance of the fact are possibilities, probabilities, and likelihoods. The decisions of free agents constitute one of these things.

5. Act Productivity a Mystery?

Due emphasis must be given to the important point that freedom of the will is nowise at odds with the Principle of Causality as long as the locus of causal determination is located in the thought-process of the agent—that is, as long as causal determination is canalized through the mediation of the choices and decisions emergent from his deliberations. And there is consequently no opposition between freedom and causal determination as long as that determination is effected by what transpires in the mind-proceedings of agents and the matter is one of agent-productivity.[10] And so, setting free will at odds with determinacy is fundamentally fallacious because it too rides roughshod over the crucial distinction—that between the agent-external causality of impersonal events and the agent-internal productivity of deliberative thought.

In these discussions one often meets with the following reasoning:

> Free will is mysterious and supra-natural. For it requires a suspension of disbelief regarding the standard view of natural occurrence subject to the Principle of Causality.

Along these lines one recent writer complains:

> Agent causation is a frankly mysterious doctrine, positing something unparalleled by anything we discover in the causal processes of chemical reactionism, nuclear fission and fusion, magnetic attraction, hurricanes, volcanos, or such biological processes as metabolism, growth, immune reactions, and photosynthesis. Is there such a thing? When libertarians insist that there must be, they [build upon sand].[11]

But this sort of complaint is deeply problematic because only a plausible and inevitable distinction is at issue, namely that between explanations that ignore and explanations that invoke the thought processes of agents. So in the end, free will, properly regarded, hinges on the capacity of the mind to seize the initiative in effecting changes in the developmental course of mind-brain coordinated occurrence. Need this be the case, or should it be seen as something mysterious and supra-natural?

With the development of minds upon the world stage in the course of evolution, various capacities and capabilities come upon the scene emergently, adding new sorts of operations to the repenetorness of mammalian operations—remembering past occurrences, for example, or imagining future ones. And one of these developmental innovations is the capacity of the mind to take the initiative in effecting change in the setting of mind from coordinate developments. Accordingly, the explanatory rationale for this innovation is substantially the same as that for any other sort of evolution-emergent capability, namely that it contributes profitability to the business of natural selection. There is nothing mysterious or supranatural about it.

This present fallacy of the perfected unintelligibility of "agent causation" rests on a failure of imagination. It is predicated in an inability to actualize that with the evolution of intelligent agents there arises the prospect of intelligence-guided agency determined through the deliberations of these intelligent agents.

And in this connection one meets yet another common fallacy. For down the corridors of time have echoed the words of Spinoza:

> Men believe that they are free, precisely because they are conscious of their volitions and decision, and think not in the slightest about the causes that dispose them to those appetites and volitions, since they are unknown to them.[12]

And here Spinoza was echoed by Charles Darwin when, soon after completing the voyage of the *Beagle*, he wrote:

> The general delusion about free will is obvious because man has the power of action but he can seldom analyze his motives (originally mostly instinctive, and therefore now [requiring] great effort of reason to discover them . . .)[13]

Apparently Darwin thought (with Spinoza and perhaps Freud) that action is genuinely free only when it is activated entirely by fully explicit, consciously recognized, and rationally evaluated and certified motives. But this insistence on appropriate motives recognized as such distorts the issue. For as long as the agent acts on his own motives—without external duress or manipulation—his action is free in the standard (rather than rationalistically reconfigured) sense of the term. Motivation as such does not impede freedom—be it rationally grounded or not. For a will that is responsive to an agent's motivation is thereby free, and it matters not how compelling that motive may be in relation

to the resolution at issue.[14] After all, a person's nature is manifested in his decisions and finds its overt expression realized in them. His decisions are nothing but the overt manifestation of his inner motivational nature. It is through his decisions and consequent actions that a person displays himself as what he actually is.

To "free" the will from obeisance to the agent's aims and motives, needs and wants, desires and goals, likes and values, personality and disposition is not to liberate it but to make it into something that is not just useless but even counterproductive. What rational agent would want to be harnessed to the decision-effecting instrumentality that left his motivations by the wayside? A will detached from the agent's motives would surely not qualify as his! It would be a rogue will, not a personal one.

6. The Overall Lesson

We have now examined some fallacious arguments against freedom of the will, and the list could easily be continued. But the overall lesson should already be clear. In each case the misconception at issue can be overcome by drawing appropriate distinctions whose heed makes for a more viable construal of how freedom of the will—if such there is—should be taken to work. So at each stage there is some further clarification of what free will involves. There gradually emerges from the fog an increasingly clear view that what is at issue here is the capacity of intelligent beings to resolve matters of choice and decision through a process of deliberation on the basis of beliefs and desires that allows for ongoing updates and up-to-the-bitter-end revisability.

All of the currently contemplated fallacies of free will have to share one significant feature in common. All of them are from the idea that free agency is at odds with the nature of causality as we encounter it in other areas of inquiry. But even if this claim were conceded, the conclusion that people draw from it—that claims of free agency are inappropriate and untenable—would not follow. After all, properly understood, freedom of the will should not be at odds with our knowledge about how things work in the world. A viable theory of free will should—nay, must—proceed on a naturalistic basis. And the idea that this is infeasible is by all the available indications based on an incorrect and fallacious view of what freedom of the will is all about. An appropriate viable conception of free will must and should be developed within the framework of scientific validity.

Notes

1. See, for example, Lehrer (1980).
2. Dennett, *Elbow Room: The Varieties of Free Will Worth Wanting* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1984), p. 99 (my italics). Compare also ibid. p. 134 and Dennett, *Freedom Evolves* (New York: Viking, 2003), p. 16.
3. To illustrate "backward convergence" think of retreating to point 1 from point 2, and doing so by successive halfway steps, first to the midpoint between 1 and 2, then to the midpoint from there to 2, and so on. With each step one draws closer to point 2, but will never succeed in reaching it.
4. See Ginet (1960), Kane (1996), Van Inwagen and Zimmerman (1998), and compare Dennett (2003), pp. 99 and 134.
5. Note that while predetermination entails precedence-determination, the converse is not the case: precedence determination does not entail predetermination.
6. Such a dismissal of the idea of punctiform constituents of nature traces back to Aristotle's rejection of actual infinites.
7. See Grosseteste, tr. by Neil Lewis (1991). The tract *De libero arbitrio* influenced John Duns Scotus, the Schoolman who most enthusiastically maintained the freedom of the will.
8. "Der Akt des Wollens . . . ist so einfach eine Grunderscheinung des geistigen Lebens, dass es nur erlebt und nicht erläutert werden kann." Lotze (1852), p. 300.
9. In the Preface of his *Theodicée* Leibniz maintained that two great labyrinths threaten to entrap the human mind: that of free will and necessity, and that of the continuum. And he saw the two of them as inextricably intertwined and interconnected.
10. "A proper Principle of Causality nowise impedes free will" (Das wahre Causalprincip steht . . . der Freiheit nicht im Wege). Lotze, *Microcosmus: An Essay Concerning Man and His Relation to the World* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1885), p. 16.
11. Dennett, *Freedom Evolves* (New York: Viking, 2003), p. 120.
12. Spinoza, *Ethics*, Book I, Appendix.
13. Charles Darwin, *Charles Darwin's Notebooks, 1836–1844: Geology, Transmutation of Species, Metaphysical Enquiries*, ed. by Paul H. Barrett, Peter Jack Gautrey, Sandra Herbert, David Kohn, and Sydney Smith (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1987), p. 187.
14. Lotze, *Microcosmus*, p. 287.

5

Free Will as Outside Causality But Compatible With it

Synopsis

(1)While Laplacean determinism looks to be at odds with free will, the matter is not so straightforward. (2) Causal predetermination indeed blocks freedom, but motivational precedence-determination—which is something quite different—does not. (3) To articulate a satisfactory theory of the will one needs to distinguish between two sorts of occurrences: events *that are processes which take time, and* eventuations *that are effectively instantaneous. For choices and decisions are not events but rather are terminating eventuations for courses of deliberation. (4) The Principle of Causality has it that, stochastic occurrences apart, all of nature's events admit of causal explanation. And there is no cogent reason to deny causality to the free* actions *that are consequent upon a free* decision*. Actions can unproblematically be seen as free without any lapse of causality, although decisions themselves are something else again.*

1. Averting the Perspective of Laplace

The Principle of Causality—to the effect that all events, human actions included, are causally explicable—is certainly not an established fact that demonstrably characterizes the world as we experience and study it. To be sure, it may perhaps be—as is sometimes maintained—no more than a "metaphysical postulation."[1] But the extent of its acceptance and popularity among scientists and theorists of all sorts makes it injudicious for free-will libertarians to pick their quarrel at this point. Yet how—if at all—can they manage this?

Two philosophical anecdotes about staying put in place are of special importance for a theory of free will. One is that of the Socrates of the *Phaedo* who, in deciding to stay put and take his punishment rather than escape, makes his muscles obey his will. The other is John Locke's story of the man who, by deciding to remain in a room that (unbeknownst to him) is locked, acts freely by doing that which he inevitably must. The first anecdote suggests that what happens is sometimes a result of a free choice. The second suggests that the actual—and intended!—result of a free choice can sometimes be independent of the will's operations. An adequate theory of the will must accommodate both of these facts.

The story of Locke's locked room suggests an easy way to combine free will with causal determinism. For as long as people decide to do freely that which is determinately inevitable, freedom and causality will stand in harmonious coordination. (Think here of Leibniz's Preestablished Harmony.) However, in this picture natural causality appears to dominate the will, and this runs contrary to the *Phaedo* story, where the will is supposedly in charge. An adequate theory of free will must have it both ways and be able to accommodate both perspectives, giving to thought and to physical causality alike their just due in relation to what actually occurs. The present chapter endeavors to articulate a theory of this sort.

As Pierre Simon de Laplace saw it:

> We ought to regard the present state of the universe as the effect of its antecedent state and as the cause of the state that is to follow. An intelligence knowing all the forces acting in nature at a given instant, as well as the momentary positions of all things in the universe, would be able to comprehend in one single formula the motions of the largest bodies as well as the lightest atoms in the world, provided that its intellect were sufficiently powerful to subject all data to analysis. So nothing in history would be uncertain to it; the future as well as the past would be present to its eyes.[2]

There is little if any room for an effective (rather than merely acquiescent) freedom of the will in a world designed along these lines—a prospect that was gleefully accepted by Laplace himself and his determinist followers. For in such a world all of an agent's actions are already a foregone conclusion before the birth of that agent himself. However, as will appear, substantial problems confront such a position.

G. E. Moore envisioned the opposition between causality and free will in the following terms:

> If we have Free Will, then it must be true in *some* sense, that we sometimes could have done what we did not do; while if everything is caused, then it must be true, in *some* sense, that we never could have done what we did not do.[3]

However, even if Moore's point were perfectly true, it really takes us nowhere. Consider an analogy. Clearly, in *some* sense banks (viz., as financial institutions) are sometimes surrounded by streets, while in *some* sense banks (viz., as river-verges) must always abut on water. But there just is no conflict at issue here because those senses are quite different. And in Moore's case a similar equivocation pertains to that "would have done otherwise." [4] For those other options could be either

- *available* as theoretically *conceivable* alternatives to what has actually occurred,

or

- *attainable* as practical, actually *achievable* alternatives to what has actually occurred.

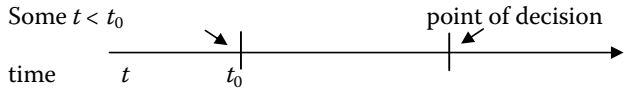
And very different things are at issue here. Even the most rigid determinist could readily accept the first by firmly rejecting the second. So Moore's contention does not get a grip on the issue. His seemingly straightforward way of opposing free will and the causal explicability of actions just does not work.

2. Predetermination vs. Precedence Determination

Yet another fallacy that one encounters in free-will discussions runs as follows:

Display 1

TIMING AND DETERMINATION



> Since predetermination is incompatible with free will, so is the determination of a decision's outcome by the agent's own decision-engendering deliberations.

This objection overlooks an important distinction, namely that between predetermination and what might be called precedence determination. The former calls for predictability as of some antecedent time; the latter involves no such thing. This crucial difference is illustrated in Display 1.

With predetermination what happens at t_0 is determined by (i.e., is law-deducible from) that which happens at some earlier time *t*. Already at this earlier time the decision becomes settled: a foregone conclusion that is reached in advance of the fact. Some earlier state of affairs renders what occurs at the time causally inevitable. With precedence-determination, by contrast, what happens at t_0 is also determined by what goes before—but only by *everything* that happens from some earlier time *t* up to but not including t_0.[5] Both alike are modes of determination by earlier history. But unlike the former, the latter requires an infinite amount of input-information, which is, of course, never available. What we thus have in this latter case is a mode of antecedence determination that does not give rise to predictability but is in fact incompatible with it.

Just exactly such precedence-determination can, and should, be contemplated in relation to free decisions and choices: a determination by the entire concluding phase of the course of the agent's deliberation that issues in the decision or choice at issue.

Predetermination means that the outcome becomes a foregone conclusion at some antecedent time. The entire matter becomes settled in advance of the fact. This is indeed incompatible with free will because it renders the agent's will inert at some point, depriving him of the power to change his mind. There is some time in advance of the point of decision when the whole matter becomes settled.

Precedence-determination, by contrast, means that the final phase of the deliberation is decisive. The outcome is never settled in advance—it isn't over "until the fat lady sings." And it should be clear that this sort of antecedent determination geared to the unfolding course of deliberation in its final phase is nowise at odds with freedom of the will.

3. The Crucial Contrast between Events and Eventuations

A preliminary bit of process metaphysics will prove useful in pursuing clarity regarding determinism and free will. For two distinct sorts of occurrences or happenings transpire in the world, namely *events,* which are processes that take time, and *eventuations,* which

are temporally punctiform, instantaneous occurrences. However, the processes at issue with *events* always occupy *a finite interval of time that is* OPEN *at both ends through lacking a first and last moment.* (Event-processes, that is to say, have starting and ending *times*, but not starting and ending *points*, since what occurs at those terminating times does not belong to the event as such: the finishing-point of a race, instead of being the last instant of the race, is the first instant at which the race is no longer in progress.) By contrast, there are also *eventuations* that are instantaneous. These are not actually processual doings, but rather are mere junctures of passage—transitions that mark the beginnings and endings of events. Looking for something is an activity and thereby an event, while actually finding it is an eventuation. (One can be engaged in looking, but not in finding.) One can ask "How long did he take him to *run* the race?" but not "How long did he take to *start* the race?" Listening to someone is an activity, but understanding what they say is not. Activities are events, eventuating terminations are not: they are mere eventuations. And beginnings and endings are eventuations rather than events.

The writing of a sentence is a process; its completion is not. Such eventuations are beginnings and endings, not processes, and they are thus not events but boundaries to events. By contrast, events are natural processes that have a duration, however short: they are never instantaneous. Events as processes are a part of the machinations of nature, whereas mere eventuations—instantaneous beginnings and endings—are artifacts of mind, rational constructions to mark processual beginnings and endings. Eventuations, so understood, do not constitute parts of nature's processual flow but merely beginnings and endings within it.

Even as the terminating period is not part of the sentence or statement whose completion it betokens, so an eventuation is not part of the natural event-process whose beginning or ending it indicates.[6] The processes that constitute the causal flow of nature's time come along in dribbles of finite duration. But eventuations are too short lived to play a role in the processual commerce of nature. Natural causality relates to events, not eventuations. Instantaneous occurrences are never, as such, items that belong to natural history. Instantaneous occurrences, in sum, are not objective constituents of natural history but thought-imposed contrivances devised for reasons of cognitive convenience. They are not part of the world's causal commerce.

And so, even if we accept the Law of Causality and with it the idea that every *event* has a cause, the question still remains whether every *occurrence* in the world is qualified to count as an event *in this* cause-emergent sense.[7] But this will not be the case once eventuations are seen as constituting occurrences along with events. And just this is the prospect we here exploit in refusing to consider eventuations (event-boundaries, if you will) as themselves causally enmeshed events.

With nature understood as the commerce of events, eventuations as instantaneous occurrences come to be seen not as *super* but rather as *extra* or *supra*. They are descriptive mind-constructs (*entia rationis*), which, as such, stand apart from "the order of nature" when this order is understood as the manifold comprising all the events that occur over time. They thus belong to the machinery of conceptualization that minds impose on nature: instrumentalities of descriptive convenience that do not correspond to anything enjoying independent existence in the real world. Like the North Pole or the equator, they are not real items existing physically in nature but thought-instrumentalities projected by minds in the interests of description and explanation.

When we embark on the enterprise of characterizing experienced reality and its ways, we make use of descriptive resources of our own devising that reflect a theoretical standpoint that transcends anything we could possibly observe. The conceptual resources we employ provide organizing principles for dealing with our observations that include much material that itself does not—and by its very nature could not—be encountered observationally. Some key examples of this are:

- the *space and time* framework (Experience relates only to the here and now.)
- *lawfulness* (Experience relates only to the particular, never the universal.)
- *causality* (Experience relates only to the what of things, never the why.)
- *purpose* (Experience relates only to the what of things, never the what-for.)
- *possibility* (Experience relates only to the actual, never the possible.)

All of these features of reality figure prominently in our efforts to provide an account of it in relation to matters that do not themselves belong to our observational experience of the world but rather project upon that experience a variety of mind-supplied devices that enable the mind to get a better grasp on things.

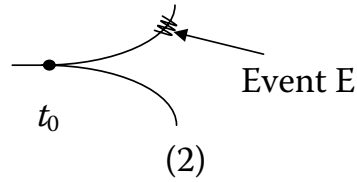
This perspective of what may be called *conceptual idealism*[8] underlies the present view of free decisions. For as effectively instantaneous eventuations they are not part of Nature's flow of in-principle observable experience. Instead they are purely "theoretical entities" that form a part of the thought-machinery we use in demonstrating and explaining that experience. Even as the North Pole has a place on the globe as we conceptualize it, without occupying space as a physically experientiable object, so free decisions have an occurrence in the framework of time without occupying an experientiable timespan. And even as the North Pole belongs to theoretical rather than physical geography, so our decisions belong to theoretical rather than phenomenological psychology—unlike, in this regard, to the actual actions in which they result.

And the key point for present purposes is that decisions are eventuations—terminations of courses of deliberation—and as such fall outside the world's causal conscience. They are, by their very nature, not the sorts of things for which causal explanations are in order. And in consequence they are not in conflict with the Principle of Causality; they are irrelevant to it.

4. Free Will Stands Outside the Stream of Natural Causality

Some theorists aver that the very concept of being someone's action is incompatible with its being necessitated in the order of natural causality, so that a pervasive causal determinism of occurrence would mean that "there would be no such thing as an *act* nor would anything even be *done*."[9] But this opposition between freedom and causality is actually a red herring. For properly understood, free agency need not—does not—violate the causal order of nature. After all, a free agent must constantly avail himself of this lawfulness to implement his decisions. (How in a lawless world could one set out to brew a cup of tea?)

And so, despite their seeming conflict, causality and free will must—and can—be reconciled. Thus consider the following picture where an act of choice at t_0 so functions as to determine whether alternative (1) or (2) is to ensue and thus whether event *E* is to occur or not:



And let it be that (1) is chosen. Note that event E (and indeed *every* event) is in principle law-determinately predictable from prior events—albeit not from events prior to t_0. And so on this basis the Principle of Causality is honored—notwithstanding that free decision at t_0. (However, the outcome will not be law-determinately predictable from event junctures *prior* to t_0.)

An important distinction is at work here. For up to and including the time when you reach T you are on path A. And at any given time after t_0 you are either in path (1) or path (2). That "turning" is not an *event* that occurs at some time, some juncture in the course of natural events. It is an *eventuation* rather than an *event.* It is not a part of natural history, but a perspectival device imposed descriptively *ab extra* upon this course to characterize some aspect of its nature. It is not itself an occurrence that calls for causal explanation but a descriptive aspect of the course of occurrences. That "turning" is what the medievals would call an *ens rationis,* a mental contrivance rather than a component of objective reality.

Conceivably, nothing that happens prior to t_0 predetermines whether (1) or (2) is to follow. Up to and including point P this remains undetermined. But at any point after P (no matter by how little) the routing becomes an accomplished fact. Up to and including that turning point the issue is unresolved. At any and every subsequent time it is settled. And *there just is no first inaugurating time at which the issue is resolved*. "The point of issue-resolution" is a mentally imposed fiction that is not an actual point on the diagram at all—resolution is an eventuation, not an event.

Free choices and decisions are causal singularities; they divide the processual course of causal process into before and after and are occurrences that mark not so much a break in the world's causal flow as a redirection of it. For when an act of free will occurs, the flow of causality is diverted into another direction by an eventuation that does not constitute an actual part of it. Like a railway shunt or a water sluice, free decision allows the sequence of occurrence to go on uninterrupted but redirected. And on this basis, free decisions and choices will not abolish or abrogate the causal order: deciding leaves the Law of Causality entirely intact, merely *deflecting*[10] the stream of causality from one developmental direction (of what would otherwise be the case) into another.[11] These shuntings determine the flow of the stream without themselves forming parts of it.[12]

Let it be that I decide to do something with metaphysical freedom and proceed to do it—say, to wiggle the fingers of my right hand for the sake of an example. Then, of course, every biological process that ensues—brain electrodynamics, nerve transmissions, muscle intention, and so on—will be causally explicable, but the eventuation is not explicable in the normal mode of causality because no finite series of antecedent centers needs both the causal instances of such an eventuation. Itself causally inexplicable, it initiates a causal chain and thereby reorients nature's flow of causality into new and otherwise inexplicable directions.

On such a view, an "act of choice" takes place IN the realm of physico-natural causality—it transpires on the world-stage alright—but yet is not OF that realm as part of the manifold of nature's causality. In our quasi-technical terminology, that "act of will" is an occurrence which, as an *eventuation* rather than *event*, fails to belong to nature's law-governed flow of events. Like the pause that gives dramatic emphasis to the discourse, it is not part of what is said: it is not part of the action—though doubtless attuned to and consonant with it, and having a significant bearing upon it.

Decisions, so regarded, are not themselves occurrences within the order of natural causality; they are, instead, explanatory thought projections that serve to explain features of how that course unfolds. They are features of structure, not of content. They are, in this regard, like the period that marks the end of a sentence when you record a conversation in writing, but which never figures as part of that conversation itself (as long as you are not giving dictation).

Of course, once a decision is actually made, nature-causality can take over as regards the consequences—no problem there! But antecedently the decision itself—an eventuation rather than an event—stands outside the order of natural causality.

The outcome of a free decision or choice cannot be predetermined or predicted with categorical certainty. But can free volition even be *explained* after the fact? To assess this, consider the aforementioned situation where the agent comes to a fork in the road at time t_0 and freely chooses to follow path (1) rather than path (2). At any time after t_0 we find our agent on path (1) we can certainly use causal principles to explain his being there in terms of where he was before. But it is certainly not something we could have foreseen with certainty earlier on, nor indeed could securely predict from any finite body of t_0-antecedent

refutation. Recall that it is *precedence determination* that is at work here. To account for decision-outcomes determinately we need the complete up-to-the-bitter-end story of the agent's deliberation. And while this is certainly something that is out there in the realm of fact—so that his choice *has* an explanation in terms of what precedes, it is nevertheless not a story that we could ever manage to tell in a more than approximate way. With precedence determination, the outcome of a free decision defies *the realizability* rather than the *existence* of a complete explanation in terms of what goes before.

Decisions do indeed issue determinately from courses of deliberation, but they do so as eventuations within *the final causality of agency* rather than as events governed by *the efficient causality of nature*. For decisions are the outcomes (conclusions, terminations) of processes of choice and deliberation that are not rendered actual (let alone inevitable) by the lawful determinations of nature's impersonal causality but issue from the motivationally guided deliberation of agents. And while the outcome of most or many courses of deliberation may be predictable—this will be so only probabilistically and not categorically. For the outcome of a deliberation, however probable, is not rendered inevitable at any previous juncture by the operation of nature's lawful order. While the free acts of agents *occur within* nature, the decisions themselves from which they flow do not, as choices, *belong* to the causal order of nature as such. For not being events in and of themselves, they function noncausally in deflecting the course of natural events from its otherwise direction of flow. As redirective reorientations of the flow of natural causality, they are, in effect, noncausal determinants of human actions.[13]

There is thus no reason why a suitably sophisticated theory of free will cannot accommodate itself to even rigoristic causality. To be sure, Roderick Chisholm has maintained that in "doing what we [freely] do, we cause certain events to happen, and nothing—and no one—causes us to cause those events to happen."[14] But as it stands, this is decidedly problematic. A more plausible formulation of the situation would have to be somewhat more nuanced—rather along the following lines:

> A free choice or decision of ours consists in a resolution that is an eventuation and thus not an event, and is for this reason not itself subject to laws of causal production. It is the deliberative (and thereby measured) end-product of a course of deliberation. Its occurrence does, however, inaugurate a chain of events, *all* of which can themselves be explained causally.

But how are such eventuations on the order of decision-outcomes themselves to be explained? Surely they are not inexplicable? No, they are not. They can indeed be explained—but only on the basis of *the entire endgame* in an agent's deliberations. And while this permits *ex post facto* explanation with the wisdom of hindsight, it precludes any prospect of nonprobabilistic predictivity.

The events that constitute a course of deliberation antecedent to a decision or choice do indeed so function as to determine the outcome. But *it is only the end-game—the final, concluding phase of the agent's motivationally geared deliberations—that is decisive*. And this means:

1. Such synoptic determination precludes any predetermination that closes off all further deliberation as of some resolution-preceding time.
2. Such synoptic determination precludes any categorical (i.e., nonprobabilistic) predictivity, since prediction must always be made as of some *particular* point in advance of the fact, thus possibilizing a change during the interim.
3. Such synoptic determination proceeds via the agent's deliberations, and adequate explanation cannot leave them out of account.

It must be emphasized that, in this approach, if it were to transpire that as of some particular decision-anterior juncture two courses of agent-deliberations are exactly the same (i.e., if, at some point, the relation outcome probabilities continue to be the same throughout the remaining cause of deliberation), then the same decision-outcome will have to be reached.

A free decision, that is to say, will have to be a fixed outcome determined by the concluding phase of the *immediately* preceding deliberations—though no such decision is ever determined at any particular advance moment. The result of a decision-issuing deliberation can certainly be explained after the fact, but is never a foregone conclusion in advance of it. There is thus no irreparable quarrel between causality and freedom of the will. For free decisions and choices, being eventuations, stand outside the flow of nature's processual event-causality, thereby leaving the Law of Causality intact in the face of volitional freedom.

Modern science is a good deal better at explaining natural phenomena than at explaining psychological phenomena. It is thus not surprising that scientistically inclined determinists prefer addressing free agency rather than free decision. But, of course, freedom of the

will pivots fundamentally on the latter issue, a free action being one that results—however deterministically—from a free choice or decision. In matters of free volition it is decisions and choices that stand in the forefront, not actions.

And herein lies the point that is critical for present purposes. It is certainly *not* being maintained that as eventuations rather than events our free decisions conflict with and violate the order of nature. That would directly be absurd. But what is being said is that as eventuations rather than events they stand outside the realm of natural causality as standardly construed, seeing that what is at issue is not the *content* of natural occurrence but its *structure*.

Notes

1. See Hartmann (1879).
2. Laplace (1814), "Preliminary Discourse."
3. *Ethics* (London: William & Norgate, 1912), p. 211.
4. Ibid, p. 220.
5. Note that while predetermination entails precedence-determination, the converse is not the case: precedence determination does not entail predetermination.
6. The presently deployed distinction between eventuations and events has a significant history. It has an ancestry in A. N. Whitehead's distinction between an "actual entity" as a "drop of experience" and a "pretension" which is "a completion or satisfaction." (See Whitehead (1929).) Again it figures in Gilbert Ryle's distinction between ongoing processes and what he called "achievements." (See Ryle (1949).) J. L. Austin's account of verbs of contention, which, like "to know," have no present continuous, is also relevant here.
7. Compare Lotze (1885), Vol. III, p. 292.
8. See the author's book of this title published by Blackwells in Oxford in 1973.
9. See, for example, Taylor (1958), p. 216.
10. It warrants note that straddling "events" that encompass timespans within which free decisions occur cannot, on this approach, qualify as developmental processes that lie entirely within the "causal order of nature."
11. This idea that an act of free will does not break the linking chain of causality but merely diverts it in a different direction is found in the work of Niolai Hartmann. (See his *Ethik* (1935).) However, he does not explain how this redirection of causality is to be conceived of, apart from the suggestion that a free-will-engendered shunting of the flow of causality should be thought of as a "noncausal determinant of causal processes."
12. This picture of a free decision's shunting the course of causal development from one track to another is reminiscent of the "swerve" of Epicurus, albeit now in response to the intervention of choice rather than chance.
13. Thomas Pink somewhat tentatively offers the same idea, suggesting that the usual approach to free will "ignores the possibility that freedom might be a non-causal power; that in exercising freedom we might be non-causally

determining how we act." [Pink (1996), p. 108.] (Actually, Pink infelicitously formulates the last phrase as "determining how we act noncausally", which misleadingly suggests that "noncausally" applies to the act rather than to the manner of its determination.)

14. Chisholm (1964), p. 32.

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6

Free Will Excludes Causal Predetermination But Not Motivational Precedence Determination

Synopsis

(1) Deliberation brings to determinative expression the decisive motives that bear on the agent's choices and decisions. (2) These motives can subject the agent to conflicting considerations. (3) Agents determine their choice and decisions on the basis of their motives, so that even free will is subject to a determinism of sorts, namely determination by motives. In fact, metaphysical freedom not only permits but actually requires motivational determinism. (4) However, for specifically moral *freedom those determinative motives must be formed autonomously by the agent's unfettered proceedings on his own account. (5) Compulsion and undue influence in general is something very different from the natural impulsion that moves agents. (6) The usual sort of objections to motivational determinism can all be met. Appendix: Deliberation is a thought-process able to distill motives from motivating considerations.*

1. Motivational Determinism vs. Causal Necessitation

Various discussions of free will depict necessitation as its diametrical opposite. But the mere fact of its being necessitated does not of itself prevent an action from being free since the critical question "How-and-by-what necessitated?" yet remains open. For sure, the necessitation of an act by the agent's deliberations with reference to his own motives simply does not preclude an agent's freedom.

The work of deliberation is to blend various, potentially conflicting motivating factors into an overall, comprehensive motive. These

motivating factors include such items as likes, desires, inclinations, wishes, felt needs, and yearnings, as well as their opposites, dislikes, distastes, and aversions, all of which represent evaluative psychological dispositions pro and con that guide us in matters of deliberation and decision. Motives, by contrast, represent the synthesized aggregate result of the totality of such influences on the bottom-line of deliberation. And it is in this sense of the term that it can be said that motives *determine* the outcome of free choice—or, rather, that the agent determines it on their basis. And it might go without saying that this weighing of pros and cons, advantages and negativities, need not be entirely explicit, overt, and conscious: often as not, subconscious thought is at work here.

Determination of human actions can be self-supplied rather than resulting from an externally emanating imposition along the lines of constraint, coercion, and compulsion. And such internal determination would not automatically be at odds with freedom. On the contrary, determination of one's decisions and choices via one's own motives is the very quintessence of freedom of the will. To make a decision in the light of one's own, autonomously engendered motives is not a matter of being compelled against one's will—it is itself what willing is all about.

For someone to be in actual control in matters of willing, what this agent does must issue from what he thinks: if his thoughts—and specifically his choices, intentions, and decisions—were different, then his actions would be readjusted accordingly. (For example, if the driver thought that the car in front of his wasn't there, he would not stop so soon.) And since free action requires agent control, this means that an agent's free actions cannot be entirely explicable in terms that make no reference to what goes on in his mind—the agent and his thought must be uneliminably involved in any adequate explanation of a free act of his. A distinctive sort of outcome-determination comes into operation here, namely determination by a deciding agent's deliberations on the basis of his then-and-there-operative motivations. Accordingly, even free decision admits of a determination *of sorts*, but this will be *motivational* rather than *causal* in nature.

The very idea of an unmotivated action is problematic. If what the agent does is simply a spasmodic knee-jerk without motivating rhyme or reason, then this scarcely qualifies as an action of his. And much the same holds in matters of choosing. If a selection among alternatives is effected at haphazard without motivation and without at least minimal

deliberation, it cannot really constitute a choice or decision of the agent's. Under this hypothesis he is simply not engaged in the business.

With free acts of volition, the issue of determinism, properly regarded, is not whether an agent's choices and decisions have causes, but rather whether these causes—whatever they be—function independently of the deliberative thought-processes of the agent himself. Motivational determinism holds that this simply cannot bypass the agent's deliberative thought. Deliberation, after all, is the thought process by which the mind reaches a resolution amid the strains and stresses of discordant motivations (many of which may well exert their influence below the threshold of conscious recognition). These motivations interact in the process of deliberation to congeal into a decisive motive. But this outcome is nowise imposed upon the will from without, for it is just exactly this determination that constitutes an agent's free volition. Agent-internal motivation is one thing and agent constraint another—the one operating internally *within* the agent and the other externally *upon* him.

Consider this situation. I ask Robert to pick a number from 1 to 6. He selects 6. I suspected as much: his past behavior indicates that he has a preference for larger numbers over smaller and for evens over odds. So his choice was certainly not fortuitous or random but emerged from his natural inclinations. Does that make it unfree? By no means! After all, his selection was nowise forced or constrained. Those number-preferences of his were not external pressures that restricted his freedom: on the contrary they paved that way to self-expression. It would be folly to see freedom as antithetical to motivation. Quite the contrary! Volitional freedom is precisely a freedom to indulge one's own inclinations and motivations. Those operatives are, or can be, altogether endogenous—free from any *ab extra* imposition upon a decision of the will—even as the words make no *ab extra* imposition upon the meaning of the sentence they form.

Determination, after all, comes in different shapes and forms, and some of these are nowise antithetical to freedom. And an agent's free choice is not free from any and all determination—after all, a specific action must clearly be *somehow* determined as such. But this is something done by the agent who achieves this as the product of his deliberations, so that it is, in fact, his course of deliberation that, at least in its final and conclusive phase, determines the outcome. With a free action, this outcome is, accordingly, not the product of his earlier

condition, but a matter of a then-and-there determination by the agent on the basis of his own deliberations.

Suppose that a certain issue of choice perplexes me. There is much to be said for doing *A*, but equally much for doing *B*. I puzzle and ponder without reaching a resolution. Finally I say "To blazes with it! I'll just toss a coin"—and proceed on this basis, thereby winding up with doing *A*. Have I now done *A* freely? Note to begin with that I have not chosen freely to do *A*. What I have freely chosen (*ex hypothesi*) is to delegate the choice between *A* and *B* to the coin—*and then to do as the coin rules*. The reasoning goes:

> I choose freely to adopt the coin's ruling.
> The coin ruled for A.
> Therefore: (Persisting in my initial freely made policy determination) I did *A*.

What thus has to be said in strict propriety is not that I freely choose to do *A*, but rather that I freely embarked on a process of issue-resolution that led to my doing *A*. It can only be said—"by courtesy" as it were—that I freely did *A*. Linguistic convenience sometimes leads us to shortchange the facts.

Motive-formation can be of two sorts. It may be the product of influence of the common garden-variety kind that is standard in human development: parental teaching, acculturation to social mores, friendly persuasion, communal taste-making, and the like. Such normally arising influence leaves freedom intact. Or it may be a matter of undue influences—hypnosis, malign conditioning, brainwashing, or the like. Such external manipulation abolishes moral freedom.

A will that is responsive to an agent's motivation is thereby metaphysically free—and it matters not how that motive arose and how compelling that motive may be in relation to the resolution at issue period.[1] The agent's decisions are effectively the outer manifestation of her inner motivational nature: it is through her decisions and consequent actions that a person displays herself as what she actually is. Our autonomously originated motives are not imposed upon us *ab extra*; they are formative aspects of the very nature that make us who we are.

Those normal influences are part of what *constitutes* rather than *constrains* us: they serve to make us into the persons we are. But then there is also the matter of untoward manipulation. And while those former motivations that issue from the normal influences of ordinary

life leave the agent's freedom intact, the impact of undue influence or outright manipulation certainly does not.

2. Motivations and Motives

The Humean complaint—"One experiences feeling this and doing that, but one never experiences oneself"—is much like the complaint of the person who says "I see him picking up that brick, and mixing that batch of mortar, and troweling that brick into place, but I never see him building a wall." The one is as inappropriate as the other. For even as "building the wall" just exactly is the complex process that is composed of those various activities of laying now this brick, now that one, so one's self is—from the process point of view—just the complex process composed of those various physical and psychic experiences and actions in their systemic interrelationship. A person is as that person does. What individuates someone as a person, then, is something processual—namely the way or manner in which they carry on those salient processes (intelligence, rational agency, self-assertion, and social reciprocity) that constitute the defining core of personhood.

It is sometimes said that people never decide against their desires. But this is very problematic because desires are mere motivating considerations and thereby differ in comprehensiveness from the overall decision-determinative motives. After all, those motives are not a matter of desire alone—of what we would welcome and like to see happen. (At my wife's insistence, I may well help my offspring gain entry into the college of his choice, even though I would greatly prefer his going to my own alma mater.) And then, too, someone may be motivated by factors, like greed or envy, of which he does not in his heart of hearts approve.

What is critical here is the difference between *motivating factors* (motivating impetus, Latin *impulsus,* German *Treib*) as specific pressures in some direction or other, and their amalgamation into an everything-into-account fusion—*the motive proper* (motive, *causa, Motiv*) resulting from their composite interaction. The former, motivations, *incline* to action; the latter¸ motives, *determine* the action.

An agent's actual motive does not get into place until those motivating factors are weighed and combined out into the overall amalgam in which the ultimate decision or resolution is constituted. Motivation considerations are like vectors of force, but the actual motive is the aggregate result that arises from what physicists call their composition. And it is in this balancing act that the actual decision comes to be resolved.

A motivation is merely a salient *factor* within a sufficient condition for an action, while its motive is the whole thing in systemic balance. Blending motivating considerations into one overall, "everything-said-and-done" motive is a complex business that can cause people sleepless nights.

Many theorists see the balancing out of discordant motivations in the light of a conflict between rival pressures. And there are various such theories about how such a conflict comes to be resolved. Some think that the individually strongest motivating consideration will prevail.[2] Some think it is a matter of balancing out on a scale where many weaker motivations can combine to outweigh an individually stronger one. Some think that the resolution does not lie in the nature of the motivations themselves but see the crux of freedom as located exactly here, in the agent's own characteristic way of arbitrating among conflicting pressures. Just this third alternative is the position we accept here, viewing it as the contribution of the deliberating mind to configure the overall motive from the mass of interacting and often conflicting motivations. On this view, what the agent actually does in effecting choice or decision is to balance out the pros and cons as he sees that matter in the circumstances prevailing at the time. (For further detail on this issue see the Appendix to this chapter.)

People's individual choices and decisions are shaped and influenced by a wide range of motivating factors:

Display 1

MOTIVATING FACTORS

Short Term	Medium Term	Long Term
intentions	wants	needs
whims	desires	values
yearnings	wishes	dispositions
yens	preferences	goals
inclinations	aims	tastes
"inspirations"	purposes	aspirations

1 one's biogenetic heritage
2 one's innate nature, disposition, personality

3 one's acquired tastes, preferences, inclinations
4 one's transitory short-term wishes, wants, desires
5 one's spur-of-the-moment, at-the-moment resolutions and reactions

Clearly 1 and 2 are inflexible. Choices determined on this basis are less made *by* the individual than *for* the individual. But as one moves down the line there is increasing volatility, changeability, and amenability to revision and reorientation. So 4 and 5 are highly pliable and subject to at-will modifications, while 3 occupies an intermediate halfway house. The role of the will accordingly becomes increasingly prominent as the power of individual control grows stronger. The role of short-term factors is thus particularly significant for freedom of the will.

Display 1 offers a survey of key motivating factors. It is important to recognize that only some of these factors are long term and thus exert their impact well in advance of the fact. All are subject to change, with some of them quite volatile and changeable on very short notice (or none at all). Accordingly, to see a free decision as formed via the operations of motivating factors is by no means to see it as PRE-determined in any significant shape or form.

Could one not move straight from the motivations to the outcome, and simply eliminate the middle-man, the agent himself? After all, once those pros and cons are in place and duly assessed and coordinated the agent's work is done, the decision is effectively made, and the outcome is determined. But, of course, it is the agent himself who has produced this result, and in doing this he will introduce personal elements into the equation. Those deliberative considerations do not *impose* a resolution on the agent, but rather it is he who produces that resolution by their means through according those fictions their relative weight of significance.

Consider an illustration. While still a young man of some 30 years, the English philosopher Herbert Spencer contemplated emigration to New Zealand. In the rational and scientific manner typical of him, he made a tabulation of the advantages to either alternative, remaining in England or going to New Zealand, assigning a weight to each point of advantage. New Zealand won out by 307 to 110. So, needless to say, our philosopher decided to remain in England.[3] A realization that the motivating factors that underlay our decisions clearly sometimes function below the radar screen of our conscious awareness did not have to await the coming of Sigmund Freud.

3. Freedom from What? Certainly Not from One's Own Motives And Reasons: Freedom Demands Motivational Determination

Would free will be abrogated if it turned out that our decisions and choices were themselves determined? It all depends, for the critical question at this point is simply: determined *how and by what*. First, there is the issue of *manner,* which can range from the impersonal causality of natural forces to thought-production via an agent's deliberative reflections. Then, there is the issue of *timing*, ranging from predetermination by long-range (prior even to the agent's existence), to the zero range of mere precedence-determination. Then, as to "by what?" there is the array of alternatives ranging from cosmic fate, the agent-detached forces of nature, the agent's biophysical make-up, to the agent's psycho-motivational consideration. Some *but not all* of these various modes are antithetic to free will. For if that determination is a matter of *agent-managed thought-determination on the basis of the agent's own motivational constitution*, then nothing about it is at irreconcilable odds with freedom of the will. For such an autonomous "determinism" is not something imposed on the agent from without, seeing that it eventuates through the agent's own autonomously constituted deliberations.

Time and again we are told that theorists of free will "require a kind of causality which shall satisfy the condition [that] of *A* is a free act . . . [then] the performance of an act non- *A* is compatible with the total state of the universe, *including the psychic state of the agent*."[4] But just this is not a requirement of adequacy but the imposition of an absurdity. For detaching a choice or decision from the motivating deliberations and resolutions encompassed in the agent's "psychic state" means that the resolution is not really a choice or decision of his—let alone a free one.

The Thesis of Motivational Determinism maintains that:

> Every choice or decision that an individual makes is the determinate consequence of that individual's *then-existing* overall psychological state in point of information, preferences, inclinations, affective dispositions, and character.

And *this* specific sort of determinism is altogether compatible with freedom of the will. Free will is not at odds with determination so long as it is the agent's spontaneous *self*-determination—the determination of his autonomous deliberations—that is at issue.

However, that little qualifier "*then-existing*" is crucial here. Were it deleted—or, worse, charged to *preexisting*—the proposition would become untenable. Thus, what is perhaps the strongest form of determinism maintains that every seemingly free action of ours is causally predetermined well in advance of the fact—that long prior to the event every action of ours is rendered unavoidable by developments outside our effective control. Every word we speak, every thought we think, every response we make to anything people say and do would have been fixed in place long before the matters at issue even entered our thoughts.

As John Calvin put it, the Fall of Man story of *Genesis* has it that Adam:

> sinned willingly, not unwilling or by compulsion; by the most eager inclination of his heart, not by forced compulsion; by the promptings of his own heart, not by compulsion from without. (Calvin, *Institutes*, Bk. III. Pt. XXX, p. 296, as quoted in Pink 2003, p. 76.)

This gets to the heart of the mater. For what is essential to freedom is not indetermination but rather determination by forces and factors inherent in the motivational make-up of the agent. And what Calvin called "compulsion from without," or what Kant would call *heteronomy,* would prove fatal here.

However, autonomy—self-determination—is thus not a matter of freedom from determination as such, but rather of freedom from interference—from exogenous, externally driven manipulation, which, like threats or deceits, is imposed on the agent by an agent or agency operating from without, rather than originating in the agent's own motivational manifold. As any slave would readily attest, to indulge one's own wishes and give effect to one's own decisions is the very quintessence of freedom. But freedom from the inner *impulsion* of one's own motives—one's own wants, wishes, and aims—is no impediment to the freedom of our will. Quite the contrary! It should be clear that determination by the agent's own motives—his own wishes, objectives, preferences, inclinations, tastes—is not an obstacle to his freedom but is of its very essence.

To be sure, some theorists have held that the sort of duress that abrogates (moral) freedom is not only *external* duress (threats, blackmail, seduction) but also the "*internal* duress" of strong emotions such as anger or passion, so that the only (morally) free acts are those performed in response to the guidance of reason alone. (Spinoza is the prime

example here—albeit with antecedents in ancient Greek philosophy.) But this view of the agent's own emotion as freedom-abridging, and of internal impulsion as equivalent to external compulsion represents an unrealistically rationalistic construal of volitional freedom. If agents are to be free at all, they have to be free to be unreasonable.

4. Free Will Requires Motivational Determinism

Maintaining that a choice or decision was made freely at once invites the question: "Free from what?" And several rather different sorts of things can be at issue, specifically including:

- Freedom from *predetermination*, of any sort, be it "external" or "internal," compulsive or motivational. This is the crux of what we have here termed *metaphysical* freedom.
- Freedom from *determination by "external" factors and pressures* that interfere with an agent's agenda and intrude upon his autonomy. This is the crux of what we have here called *moral* freedom.

However, the one thing that a free will does not—and cannot—require is freedom from one's own motives. For an agent is never freer than when his choices give overt expression to his inner nature.

Some writers draw the rather different distinction between what they call the *negative* freedom from manipulation or interference by others, from the *positive* freedom from self-imposed illusion and delusion.[5] But only the external *manipulation* at issue with the forme *r*, can diminish moral responsibility—internally self-engendered *delusion* cannot manage to do so since here the burden of productive responsibility lies with the agent himself. Adequate exculpation does not ensue from contentions on the order of "My cupidity made me do it" let alone "My antipathy to albinos led to my malicious deed."

Suppose there were a motivational gap in a certain decision because its relevant motivating factors did *not* coalesce to determine a definite outcome in the agent's deliberations. What is then to close the gap between the agent's motivating considerations and his resulting choice? An incompletely motivated "act of pure will" would be effectively blind—no better than a random stab in the dark. A choice or selection for which there just is "no rhyme or reason"—one that proceeds altogether freed from the fetters of agent motivation—simply cannot be fitted into the framework of authentic freedom. To the extent a decision is detached from an agent's motivation, a choice or decision is not that agent's creature at all; it is a mere throw of the

dice. (And conversely, any choice whose explanation lies in the nature of the agent's own then-prevailing motivational condition cannot be deemed unfree.)

4. Determination By One's Autonomous Motives is the Crux of Moral Freedom

Moral freedom calls for autonomous self-motivation. As Thomas Reid rightly insisted: "If a man be a free agent, and not be governed by motives, all his actions must be mere caprice."[6] A defectively motivated action cannot issue from the will of a rational and responsible agent. Peter Bieri, too, has rightly emphasized this point:

> Suppose having a totally "free" will depended on nothing at all, a completely free-floating will detach from any and all grounding connections. Such a will would be absurd and unintelligible. Its disconnectedness would mean its independence of the agent's make-up, character, thoughts, experiences, imaginings, recollections, etc. It could, that is, be a "will" lacking any connection with all that which makes the agent into the particular person he is. In the truest sense of the word it simply could not form the agent's will at all.[7]

The long and short of it is that to be appropriately attributable to the agent as genuinely his, with the aegis of morality, acts must issue from his own autonomous motives. A choice or decision that is not the determinate product of the agent's motivation simply could not be appropriately characterized as reflecting *his* will.

Motivational determinism emerges in this light as an indispensably essential requisite—a *condicio sine qua non*—for the reality of free decision. A choice or decision that does not emerge from the motivational manifold of the agent as it functions within this individual's course of deliberations cannot be accounted as fully free. Moral freedom is accordingly not the antithesis of determination but actually a form of it, namely self-determination through one's own motives.

The decisions and choices of intelligent agents are (metaphysically) free whenever they are made by them on the basis of their motivating reasons—be those reasons of themselves good, bad, or indifferent, and be they acknowledged and explicit or tacit and unarticulated. Those motivations, however, which come into operation through untoward manipulation will diminish or even abrogate the agent's moral freedom of choice and decision. Only automatically autonomous motivations are compatible with moral freedom of the will.

When I choose alternative *A* over *B*, I can certainly be mistaken in thinking that I do so freely. My choice might be the product of hypnosis, psychic conditioning (brainwashing), or undue influence of some other heteronomous sort. But if its motivation did not so arise, then that decision or choice is morally free. Determination of one's choices from motives constituted through normal childhood training, socio-environmental conditioning, and all such ordinary, everyday garden-variety modes of motive formation—not to speak of matters of personal preference and inclination—is what characterizes rather than impedes the exercise of free will. And as the scholastic term for free will, *liberum arbitrium,* suggests, we are ourselves the arbiters of our choices and decisions, and to this (often small) extent the shapers of our fortunes. Freedom exactly consists in the capacity to implement one's own autonomously formed agenda.

And the crucial point here is that an act to whose performance the agent is *self-determined* on the basis of his deliberations qualifies as being accounted free. Freedom of the will is fully compatible with *this* sort of determinism.

We thus have here a version of compatibilism—one that acknowledges the compatibility of freedom with (a very special sort of) determination, namely determination by the agent's own autonomous motivations. For in the end, the one thing that free will must *not* be construed as being is a matter of freedom from one's own wishes and desires, one's own aims and aspirations, one's own motivation. Choice-resolutions that eventuate independently of—let alone contrary to—an agent's own information and motivated evaluation would for this very reason fail to qualify as actually appertaining to that agent; they could hardly be called *his* decisions.

5. Compulsion vs. Impulsion

Motives, to reemphasize, are agent-operated decision-determinants and not agent-external constraints. And thereby they are instruments of freedom rather than impediments to it, because it is through alignment with one's autonomously instituted motives that an agent's actions become fully free. One's own goals, objectives, or values do not figure as external constraints. To complain "My motives (nature, inclinations) compelled me to do it—they forced me against my will" is an absurdity rather than an excuse. It sets up a diverse contrast between oneself and one's motivational make-up, where in the very nature of things there will be an indissoluble unity.

In a tradition going back to the Epicureans, some writers (e.g., Spinoza) propose also to see freedom as requiring the absence of *internal drives* (inclinations, affinities, yearnings). They want to assimilate the agent's own motivations to agent-external pressures, forgetting that "the will" of an agent is not something independent of this person but an integral feature of his own being and nature.

Granted, people are sometimes driven by inner demons of some apparently self-detached sort. (Think of madmen commanded by inner voices.) But to assimilate normal and ordinary cases to these extraordinary situations and to adopt a conspiracy theory that sees people always and everywhere at the mercy of external forces that override the ordinary, everyday conditions of deliberation and decision is to verge on paranoia.

In life, as in driving an automobile, to say that people sometimes lose control is perfectly true. But to say that they never have control sounds passing strange. What critically matters here is the distinction between what belongs to the sphere of the self (the Fichtean *Ich*) as opposed to the nonself; or again that between the activity of what one actually does and the passivity of what is done to one. In acting freely an agent does not necessarily act simply in his own interest (he may certainly consider the interest of others), but he will determine his actions on his own terms—his own *agenda,* though not necessarily his own *benefit.* And so it cannot be overstressed that *determination of outcomes by motives is not only compatible with freedom but demanded by it.* For if his (the agent's) own motives are not determinative of his decisions, and choices then they could scarcely be claimed to be his.

Our own motives, however inappropriate and ill-advised they may be and however little understood in terms of their psychogenesis, nevertheless do not *constrain* our will externally from without our self but are the very core of this self's expression.

And so, motivation—be it rationally grounded or not—does not impede freedom. However inappropriate and ill-advised our motives may be, and however little understood in terms of their psychogenesis, they nevertheless are (by hypothesis) *ours.* Our inner drives are not imposed upon us. They form part of what we are, and so they do not *constrain* our will externally from without but lie at the very core of its expression. To say that an agent's motive determines his choices and decisions is certainly not to claim that he is somehow at the mercy of an alien power or potency. They are, after all, *his* motives, inherent in the manifold of his wants and wises, desires, and goals. Motive

determination is the expression of the agent's freedom in ensuring that he is doing what he wants.

Descartes said that an I, an ego, is a thing that thinks; Goethe said that it is a thing that acts; Schopenhauer said that it is a thing that wills. All three were right, and all three were wrong. All of those capacities are there: a person is a being who can act in line with her volitions as guided by her thoughts. All three are essential. (From the process-philosophical standpoint, for which much is to be said, a person is what a person does.[8]) The motivations that actuate an individual are thus not external influences upon her constituted but formative constituents of the person she actually is. The issue here is reminiscent of the thesis of German idealism that its volitions are not the *productive products* of preestablished agency, the self, but rather *formative components* of it—even as the words are not products of the sentence in which they figure but actually components that constitute it.

After all, a purely arbitrary choice or decision that is not rooted in the agent's psychological condition—in his thoughts and values—is not really a choice of that agent at all. Who in their right mind would want to be "liberated" from their own wants and wishes? What rational agent would make—or want to make—his decisions and choices in a way cut loose from his own wishes and desires in the matter? A will that resolves issues independently of the motivating considerations at work in the mind of its owner/operator is not an asset but a menace.

A choice or decision that does *not* emanate from the agent's autonomously constituted motivations but whose origins lie elsewhere does not deserve to be characterized as a free decision of the agent's. But it is a decided mistake to assimilate the *impulsion* of an agent's internalized motives to the *compulsion* of external pressures upon one's deliberations. For such an assimilation ignores the crucial difference between self-governance (autonomy) and serfdom (heteronomy) in decision making, as well as the crucial difference between self-sufficiency (spontaneity) and manipulation (compulsion).

Motivation is not a matter of *causality* in anything like the usual sense of this term, which hews rather closely to the idea Kant called "the causality of nature." It is something rather different, allied more closely to the Kantian "causality of reason." For it relates to an impetus to action grounded in thought rather than in efficient or physical causation. Granted, the operative motives play a role in choice-explanation analogous to the explanatory role of mundane occurrences in event explanation. We say "He asked because he was

curious" and this sounds a lot like "He perspired because he was hot." But appearances are deceptive here. Curiosity just is not a causally operative condition in the manner that heat would or could be. The productive efficacy of motives is something altogether different from the causal efficacy of events and the conditions they engender. For motives focus in the realm of personal and subjective thought not in the impersonal order of physical occurrence. And the determinative lawfulness of causal explanation has no parallel in the directive tendency of motive explanations. The operative role of motives in action-explanation is very different from the operative role of physical occurrence in event-explanation. Being what they are, our motives motivate rather than compel or necessitate. Very different modes of determination are at issue. Against determination through motives opens the way to a libertarian determinism.

Display 2

VARIANT THEORIES ABOUT WHAT FREE DECISIONS ARE TO BE FREE FROM IN REGARD TO MOTIVATION

1. Any and all motivational determination whatsoever. (Felt)
2. Any and all motivation that is unjust or ethically improper. (Anselm)
3. Any and all preponderant motivations that upset a motivational equipoise. (Julian of Eclanum)
4. Any and all motivation that does not ultimately issue from the agent's own choice. (Kane)
5. Any and all agent-disapproved motivation lacking the agent's ratifying endorsement. (Frankfurt)
6. Any and all motivation arising in an untoward manner outside ordinary (standard, normal) ways in which people generally form an agenda of their own. (Rescher)

To be sure, the fact that motives determine an action does not mean that we, the bystander, can securely explain (let alone prespecify) how someone will resolve their choices and decisions regarding action. Thomas Reid insisted that while "we may reason from men's motives to their actions [and he might well have added *decisions*], and in many cases with great probability," nevertheless we can never do this "with absolute certainty."[9] And this is quite correct, albeit not because those motives fail in their aggregate inclination to determine outcomes, but rather because our knowledge of people's motives is invariably imperfect.

An overall survey of alternative answers to the question of what (morally) free decisions must be free from in regard to motivation is given in Display 2. How is one to decide which of these alternatives is correct? The proper procedure lies in looking to the question that these alternatives are proposing to answer and then investigating which alternative affords the best overall balance of advantages over disadvantages in resolving the entire family of relevant problems and questions. Here as elsewhere proper philosophical procedure is a matter of cognitive cost/benefit analysis—of determining the best systemic balance of issues resolved versus problems created. And at this point the present position in this regard should be clear in the light of the preceding considerations.

6. Objections to Motive Determinism Can Be Met

On the question of free will versus determinism, there is considerable confusion not only in the wider community, but even in the minds of serious thinkers. To take but a single example, Charles Darwin appears to have been quite conflicted about the issue.[10] At one point he flatly asserts that man does not have it:

> One doubts [the] existence of free will: every action [is] determined by hereditary constitution, [the] example of others, or [the] teaching of others." (p. 526)

This is strong stuff—particularly as Darwin writes *determined* rather than *influenced* by nature and nurture. (It seems unlikely that in making such a claim about *every action* Darwin took such matters as moves in chess or shots in billiards into account.) And he went on to say:

> Brown, *Religio Medici* . . . . [contains] curious passages showing how easily chance and will of deity are confounded, [which is] well applicable to free will. (p. 550)

So perhaps free will is tantamount to chance—and, of course, as Darwin saw it nothing in the world happens by pure chance.

But then again, Darwin worried that perhaps things almost happen by chance in those circumstances where causal determination is absent or at any rate weak. For

> [When causal determinants are] weak, opposed, and complicated one calls them free will. [And] the choice of motivational phenomena [may make room for this]. (p. 108)

But then again, he went on to say:

> "Seeing a puppy playing [one] cannot doubt that they have free will, [and] if so all animals [do]." (p. 536)

The "problem of free will" is sometimes equated with the question of whether choices and decisions are somehow necessitated. But, in fact, necessitation as such is not the end of the matter because those vexing questions of *when*?, *how*?, and *by what*? arise once more to play a crucial role.

Different modes of necessitation are envisioned by different sorts of determinists. Specifically there are

- *Mechanistic* (Laplacean) determinism by the laws of nature.
- *Neurophysiologic* (materialistic) determinisms by the agent's physico-physiological brain processes.
- *Psychological* determinism by the agent's reasonality make-up and psychological disposition.
- *Personalistic motivational* determinism by the agent's deliberative thought-processes.

The first three of these are clearly incompatible with a theory of free will. Laplace's mechanistic determinism leaves room for long-term predetermination by the forces shaping nature at large. Neurophysiologic determinism removes decisions from the agent's thought-control. Psychological determinism on the basis of the agent's personality type or tasks, habits, or inclinations conflicts with the agent's at-the-moment control. In thus providing for predetermination, each of these three modes of necessitarian determinism is at odds with free will. However, this is not the case with an agent's own motivational determinism, which accords with free will in keeping his up-to-the-end thought-control over his choices and decisions.

To reemphasize: an outcome-determination of choices and decisions by the agent's deliberations is nowise antagonistic to volitional freedom. Clearly if that determination is effected without reference to the agent by forces and factors above and beyond his control by thought, then we can hardly characterize that agent as free. But if those determinative factors are agent-internal and general to the agent's mentality—if they are a matter of the agent's own plans and projects, his own wishes, desires, and purposes—then the deliberation of the values of decisions and choices nowise stands in the way of the agent's freedom. Quite the

contrary: a choice or decision that was not the natural and inevitable outcome of the agent's motivations could hardly qualify as a morally free decision of his.

Accordingly, freedom of the will is nowise at odds with a motivational determinism that places the locus of "causal" determination in the order of the causality of reason as located in the thought-process of the agent, a determination that is canalized through the mediation of the choices and decisions emergent from his deliberations. And there is consequently no opposition between freedom and determination based in agent-causality.[11] (This mode of causality will be elaborated upon in chapters 7 and 8.)

When Leibniz said that motives incline without necessitation he had in mind his distinction between necessity proper, that is, logico-conceptual, or as he called it, *metaphysical* necessity, on the one hand, and on the other the merely conditional or *moral* necessity of something that follows from a given contingent basis, such as an individuals' motivating deliberations. On such a compatibilist view, the crux of the matter is not whether or not there is determinism—it is conceded that there indeed is—but whether this determination lies with the agent himself or with his external world.

The crux here is whether there is an agent-external determinism—a determinism where all reference to the agent and his motivational deliberations can be left out of consideration in matters of explanation. Dickinson Miller has put the matter well:

> [No one likes to think that their] mind is so small and simple that one can predict its ideas. That is the real reason why people react in such cases against predicting their conduct, for if present human knowledge, which is known to be so limited, can foresee their conduct, it must be more naïve and stereotypic than they like to think it. [But] it is no reflection upon the human mind or its freedom to say that one who knew it [completely] through and through (a human impossibility) could foreknow its preferences and its spontaneous choices.[12]

The comprehensiveness at issue in these means that the information requisite for determination will not be available to others or indeed even to the agent himself. Reference to *the point of decision* is also crucial. For only then have matters gone too far for options still to be open. But this is so not because circumstances have constrained the agent but because at this point the agent himself has settled matters.

Motivational determinism seems to be one of those compromises whose correctness is betokened by the opposition it generates from both conflicting parties to a controversy. On the one side anti-libertarian determinists are its false friends in taking it to annihilate moral freedom.

In a recent discussion Galen Strawson argues for two premises:[13]

- One's acts are the product of one's psychic make-up (one's character and dispositional nature).
- One's character and dispositional nature are shaped by developments outside of one's control. (No one is *causa sui*.)

On this basis, Strawson maintains the nonexistence of moral responsibility, since this would require the agent to be in self-formulative control of what he is, which is supposedly impossible. But there are problems here. Against the second premise one could plausibly argue[14] that people do indeed shape their own character via the self-formative choices and decisions they make. Throughout life we make ourselves through what we do. Moreover, the first premise is equally problematic. For one's acts are in large measure the product of *the choices and decisions* that the agent makes willingly and deliberately on the basis of his character and nature. The agent's optative operations are not bypassed in the process but critical to it. And it is exactly in view of this that he carries a burden of responsibility. Regardless of how he came by it, the agent's motivating character is no obstacle to moral responsibility, but its very foundation. His autonomous acts and choices are, after all, institutive of what an agent is.

Another recent theorist holds that the issue of free will should be posed in the following terms:

> If your act is really free, then you could have acted or chosen differently even with *exactly the same* motives and circumstances. That is the whole point of saying, as a proof of having acted freely, "I could have chosen otherwise . . . . [even with] all factors the same—the situation, the motives, the impulses, and the judgments."[15]

Free choices—so our author holds—must be unfettered not only by agent-external considerations, but even by the agent's own motivation—his wishes and desires, goals and objectives, motives and inclinations. We are to see no problem in having rational free agents making different choices *in exactly the same circumstances*.

Along just these lines the great scholastic philosopher Duns Scotus maintained that the will's freedom resides in the inexplicability of its resolutions. A free will, so he maintained, is totally unfettered in its resolutions by any explanatory factor at all. They are without a reason, motive, purpose, aims, or such-like grounding considerations of any sort. With free choices and decisions, nothing other than the will itself comes into it: here "the will is itself the *total* cause of volition."[16] But as Leibniz justly complained, this is not freedom of the will but the Oriental despotism of *stat pro ratione voluntas*. This sort of thing may occur in the Buridan's Ass situation of equivalent choices but bears no relevancy to the operations of the human will. But there is nothing worthwhile about a "freedom" from an agent's motivation, and the Scotist view of free will thus becomes deeply problematic.

Yet another libertarian has recently rejected the idea of motivational determinism by projecting the hypothesis of the reluctant thief who, contrary to his natural inclinations, refrains on a given occasion from taking an opportunity for theft:

> There are possible worlds in which things were absolutely identical up to the moment at which our repentant thief made his decision—worlds in which, moreover, the laws of nature are just what they are in the actual world—and in which he takes the money.[17]

Here one cannot but wonder about the grounds of this author's firm confidence that there are such worlds. Where are we to find those possible worlds, and where they do come from? And what is the detail of those worlds? What exactly is it in the situation at hand that leads our thief to decline the money in this case but seize upon it in others: just what is going on in his thought? Normally the decisions of an agent are grounded in the things he believes, feels, thinks, desires, or intends. Is *all* of this to remain just as is—wholly unchanged? But then it would seem that deliberation and action become totally disconnected. Such an agent, it must be said, is not free but mad.

To say that an agent might have decided matters otherwise *in the very same circumstances* that obtained at the time is to claim that—as one recent discussant puts it—"no explanation in terms of the agent's psychological history, personal inclinations and tastes , motives , and deliberations, could account for the occurrence of the actual outcome rather than another."[18] And when this is so—when the agent's resolution

stands wholly apart and entirely detached from any and all possible grounds for the choice that he made—then what we have is not a free action, but one that is somewhere between frivolous and irrational. Random willfulness is not freedom, and its exponents are no friends to any meaningful voluntarism.

Appendix: Motives and Motivations

The distinction between motivating considerations and overall motives is important in the present context. A motivation or motivating consideration is a pro-or-con indicative factor along the lines of a desire, goal, inclination, intent, or the like. By contrast, the motive is the product of coordinating and blending all of these different and conflicting pressures into an overall outcome-determinative amalgam.

But how do motivating factors combine and unite in the constituting of motives? Two competing models have seeming plausibility, the *rival claimant model* and the *conflicting impetus model*. On the former, the motive is simply the strongest of those competing motivations on the analogy that they are rival candidates, only one of which is elected. On the conflicting impetus model, the motive is an overall combination of all those conflicting pressures—more or less an analogy with conflicting physical pressures in physical mechanics. For reasons that will emerge below, we here adopt this second model,[19] which may be taken to operate somewhat as follows.

To understand how the process of deliberation can reasonably proceed it is useful to consider an illustration. One begins by inventorying the various alternatives that constitute the range of choice: A_1, A_2, A_3. (For the sake of simplicity we will suppose just three of them.) One then examines the motivating considerations that speak for or against these various alternatives: m_1, m_2, m_3, m_4 (again, just four for simplicity). (For concreteness suppose the alternative A_i to be three different movies and the motivating factors to be entertainment value, educational value, technical innovation, and subject-matter interest.) Now each of these factors is to be assigned a measure of comparative importance—say, by distributing 100 percent across this range. And now consider the extent to which each motivating factor speaks for or against those various relevant alternatives. The resulting situation could be supposed to stand somewhat as per Display 1, where the $m_i \times A_j$ entry indicates the magnitude of value factor m_i with regard to alternative A_j (the comparative weight of those value factors being indicated in brackets alongside).

And now with each alternative A_i there emerges the sum of those pro/con motive-factor assessments, duly proportioned to their weights:

For A_1: 140 – 40 + 60 + 480 = 640
For A_2: –20 + 80 + 240 + 400 = 700
For A_3: –100 + 120 + 300 – 360 = –40

Alternative A_2 is thus the clear winner here. And note that neither is having the *biggest* m_i entry outcome-determinative (for this would lead to A_1 with its +14), nor yet is scoring best by the *highest-weighted* m_i entry determinative (for with m_4 at 40 percent this would again single out A_1 with its largest +12 entry).

In sum, determining the motives from a contribution of motivating factors involves a reasonably complex process of deliberative analysis. The decisive "motive" is not the strongest simple motivating factor, but rather a construct in whose constituting all of the motivating factors play a part.[20]

Display 3

AN ILLUSTRATIVE CASE

		A_1	A_2	A_3
m_1	[10%]	+14	–2	–10
m_2	[20%]	–2	+4	+6
m_3	[30%]	+2	+8	+10
m_4	[40%]	+12	+10	–9

It is not helpful to say, with various theorists throughout the ages, that "choice is determined by the strongest motive." This is simply misleading. Better to say that choice is determined by the interplay of motivating factors, which conspire together to form a single determinative motive.[21] And if the idea of determination is to have explanatory traction, that motive cannot be simply defined *ex post facto* by retrospection from the ultimate decision.[22] It has to—and can!—be something that the agent can figure out in the course of his decision-engendering deliberations. (Though, as the Herbert Spencer example shows, the process is doubtless a subconscious one.)

It is essential to clarify regarding free will to be very clear about the points that this Appendix is endeavoring to make. (1) It is *not* being

claimed that the process of calculation employed in relation to the Display 1 illustration exactly characterizes the line of thinking that people actually employ in deliberating. It does no more than to illustrate the *sort* of process that is employed. (2) What characterizes this reasoning at the generic level is its employment of *some* measure of the values of the various alternatives (the A_j-value of Display 3). And with respect to the various value factors at issue (the m_i) whose comparative significance as established by the agent must also be taken into consideration (via those bracketed values), the point is that all of these various factors somehow enter into consideration. (3) There is no need to suppose this process of calculation to be carried through in an explicit and overtly conscious way. It can perfectly well proceed unconsciously or subconsciously. (4) And there is no reason to think that this sort of thing can be done only by rocket-scientists. The processes of estimation and calibration at issue can be programmed into a computer far simpler than the human brain. And finally (5) note the contributing role of the individual agent in supplying a personalized estimate of various parameters (and in particular the m_i value that indicates the comparative weight accorded to various value-considerations). There is thus no way for the process to "eliminate the middle man" and bypass agents by going directly to a resolution from the motivating considerations at issue.

Notes

1. Lotze (1885), Vol. I, p. 287.
2. See Lotze (1885).
3. See Herbert Spencer, *Autobiography*, Vol. I (London & New York: Appleton, 1904), p. 429.
4. Matson in French (1991), p. 91. Italics supplied.
5. See Berlin (1958).
6. See Reid (1785), Part 4, chapter 5.
7. Bieri (2001), p. 230.
8. Compare here the discussion of "subjectless psychology" on pp. 38–43 of Messer (1911).
9. Reid (1785), Book IV, chapter 4.
10. All these quotes are from Darwin (1987).
11. "Das wahre Causalprincip steht . . . der Freiheit nicht im Wege." (Loewe 1890, p. 16).
12. Hobart (1934), p. 16.
13. See Strawson (1994).
14. With Kane (2005), chapter 13.
15. Felt (1994), pp. 20–21. Exactly the same contention is found in Kane (1985), p. 53.

16. Compare James F. Ross and Todd Bales, "Duns Scotus on Natural Theology" in Thomas Williams (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Duns Scotus* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), pp. 192–237 (see pp. 221–22).
17. Van Iwagen (1983), p. 8.
18. Kane (1985), p. 53.
19. For a critique of the rival claimant model see Edwards (1967).
20. Ross (1939) has it that while the decisive motivation cannot be located in the single strongest motivational factor, it inheres in the strongest group. But this too is counter-exampled in Display 1.
21. On these issues see Ross (1939) and Edwards (1967).
22. Edwards (1967) suggests that reasoned choice is effectively a matter of "choosing that decides which motive is to become strongest" (p. 77). But if the present analysis is correct, this will not work. Thus, consider the situation of Display 1. No matter which motive is prioritized here as being the strongest, the "correct" choice of alternative A_2 will not emerge.

7

Freedom and Motivation

Synopsis

(1) An agent need not and indeed cannot choose his own motives for choice or decision: motives themselves lie outside an agent's option-agenda. (2) And responsible free agency does not require self-construction in point of motivation. (3) Nor does it require self-understanding. (4) An act of free will is not itself willed as such—there is no regress here. (5) And willing freely does require the approbation of reason. (6) Nor yet is self-endorsement through approval by one's "better self" a requisite here. (7) Random willfulness is not freedom: liberty of indifference is something quite different from free will as such. (8) The story of Buridan's Ass is instructive in this regard.

1. Must an Agent *Choose* His Motives for a Decision to Qualify (Morally) as Free?

The preceding discussion has maintained that only those acts that are determined by the agent's deliberations on the basis of motives that are authentically his own deserve to be characterized as fully free. But some theorists go beyond this to hold that to qualify as the agent's own those motives must not only be *held* by the agent on autonomous grounds but require some such further condition as being:

- chosen by the agent
- approved by the agent
- approved by reason

There is, however, good reason to think that each of these addenda is unnecessary and unwarranted. Let us begin with the first.

In his "Dilemmas of Determinism," William James distinguished between what he called soft and hard versions of determinism. The soft determinist deems to be freedom-excluding only such agent-external impositions as outright interference, undue influence, duress, *force*

majeure, and the like—agent-external impositions, which pretty much everyone accepts as incompatible with (morally) free agency.[1] But hard determinism also sees as potentially freedom-excluding such agent-internal factors as the agent's own wants, wishes, desires, or similar motivations. For along with many others, James was drawn to the idea that the will is not *really* free when the determinative motivators of its resolutions are not themselves freely chosen by the agent at issue.

Robert Kane proposes to see freedom as not just a matter of people's doing what they will or want, but of having "the ultimate say about what it is that they want or will." Then too, Gilbert Ryle's *Concept of Mind* pressed the question "Are voluntary volitions themselves made voluntarily?" and then proposed a dilemma: "If so, then we have an infinite regress, and if not, then how can the actions that issue from them be deemed voluntary?"[2]

One recent theorist argues the impracticability of free will on roughly the following basis:[3]

- For free will to exist one must be (causally) responsible for the operative psycho-motivational conditions.
- But it is impossible to be causally responsible for one's psycho-physical condition. One cannot create oneself or one's mental states *ex nihilo*.
- Ergo, there can be no such thing as free will.

The fly in this argumentation's ointment is its reliance on the idea that causal responsibility for what one does requires and presupposes causal responsibility for the causes of what one does—that is, the idea of a temporal retrogression of causal responsibility. However, the cause of the cause of an event is no more a cause of that event than the father of the father of a person is a father of that person, or the source of the source for an author is a source for that author. That salient premise unravels once one distinguishes between causal *ancestry* or productivity (which indeed is backwards transmissive) and causal *parenthood* or creativity (which is not). Causal responsibility works on the latter model, not the former. For even as the products employed in human artifice are not themselves artificial "all the way through" but must ultimately trace back to productions of nature, so the self-determination of human motivation will eventually trace back to something that is nature-provided in the individual's make-up. But this no more impedes his choices and decisions from being agent-made than the fact that the builder does not make the stones prevents the wall from being builder-made.

A whole host of thriving issues open up along these lines, Let us begin with the idea of self-constitution.

2. One's Nature and Moral Freedom

Various free-will theorists maintain that for a decision to be free, the conditions and circumstances that lead the agent to make it must themselves be matters under the agent's free control. But this idea is deeply problematic. Consider the following situation:

> You are in a theater. Someone shouts "Fire!" You make for the exit.

Your decision to leave is (by any normal standard) the very paradigm of a free decision. Nevertheless, we would presumably account for it somewhat as follows:

- The events of the place and time create in you the impression that swift departure is necessary for self-preservation.
- Your appropriately practical sense of self-preservation induces you to decide to leave.

Neither the belief in danger, nor the desire for self-preservation were things of your own choice or making. The former was produced by that individual who shouted a warning; the latter is the product of your natural constitution, which also is clearly not of your own making. Nonetheless, nothing here prevents your decision from counting as free by any, commonsensical standard of what freedom involves. The idea that only those acts qualify as free that are the product of circumstances freely produced by the agent himself is both inherently impracticable (on grounds of infinite regress) and at odds with the way in which the concept of freedom standardly works.

We do not, of course, make or choose our own natural constitution. However, one's nature does not abrogate moral freedom, and it affords no relief from moral responsibility: "My nature made me do it" is not an excuse. In most crucial respects the hands we play are dealt to us by Fate. We do not control when we come into this world, or where, or under what conditions. We do not control our talents, but only their cultivation; we do not determine our personal shortcomings, but only how we come to terms with them. And only in rare cases, and to a very limited extent, do we control our dispositions and motivations.

It is, no doubt, not only unfortunate but reprehensible that we should be distrustful, jealous, and prideful, and we might well wish that we were otherwise. But we are what we are: we do not choose our

motivations, we have them. It might be a better world if we were not avaricious, even as it might be a better world if we were not arithmetically challenged. But we cannot make it so—that's just how it is. And the things our nature has us do are, by definition, ours: we are not responsible *for* them but become responsible for things *through* them.

That free volition demands a retrogression from a choice of actions to a choice of motives is similarly untenable. Motives by their very nature just are not the sort of things that are open to a person's choice or control, any more than a person's talents or tastes. Such things just are not optional, nor yet are they *imposed upon* us from without. Our motives are generally features not of what we do but of what we are. Instead, they constitute us as integral facets of our nature—formative components of what we are.

In the final analysis, the objection that people do not choose or control their motives is a nonissue as regards moral—let alone metaphysical—freedom. It is simply wrong to think that motives have to be of one's choosing or making for one to be responsible for them.[4] The person who maligns another out of envy does something reprehensible because he *has* the enviousness and not because he himself somehow selects or *creates* it. My wishes are largely embedded in my nature and I did not make it—only figuratively is there such a thing as a "self-made man." We do not make ourselves and we do not decide about deciding. As Hobbes already observed: "I acknowledge this liberty: that I can do if I will, but to say I will if I will, I take to be an absurd speech."[5] If we had to decide how to decide we would embark on an infinite and stultifying regress. We are in control with respect to our choices and decidings, but our choices and decisions require no further prior deliberative choice. And analogously our motives themselves need not be subject to any antecedent motivating control, although this nowise exempts them from moral evaluation.

However, the fact of the matter is that our wants and wishes are no more subject to our own selective agency than our birthdates or our membership in the human species. You might not much care for being a twenty-first-century human and would prefer being an eighteenth-century sheepdog. But in such matters the idea of having an ultimate say about it—or indeed any say at all—is simply absurd. Like it or not, we simply have our motivational nature without there being any selectivity about it. And in fact we not only have it, but are constituted by it: the nature we "have" is indigenous to what we are, not contrastive

to it as one might contrast oneself to something owned in the way of (say) owning an automobile. And this engenders no conflict with free agency, seeing that the self we are is a precondition for, rather than an obstacle to self-expression.

The crux of the matter is that those motives and intentions are ours not because we *choose* them but because we *have* them and *implement* them and thereby effectively (if tacitly) *adopt and endorse* them. In acting upon them we effectively choose to implement and thereby to ratify those motives by way of endorsement. And this quite suffices for responsibility.

Our motivation is an expression of what we *are,* not of what we might want to be. Tomas Reid deliberated about Cato, the ancient Roman of whom it was said that he was good because he could not be otherwise. "This saying," Reid wrote, "is not praise of Cato but of his constitution, which was no more the work of Cato than his existence."[6] But it is a very problematic claim that a person deserves praise or blame only for what he *does* and not for what he *is*. That is just not how things work.

A person's free decisions are not the products of a struggle between two conflicting potencies, his inner nature as defined by his motivations, and its competing rival, the will. On the contrary, a person's nature is exhibited by his decisions and finds its overt expression realized in them. His decisions are nothing but the overt expression and manifestation of his inner motivational nature. For as Schopenhauer already maintained, the motives at work in one's decisions are not externally imposed upon the self but inhere in its very makeup.[7] It is through his decisions and consequent actions that a person displays himself as what he actually is. And its emanating from the agent's motivation does not render the act unfree. Indeed, did it not have this aspect—did it not root in the agent's motivational makeup—it could not really qualify as a free act of the agent.

3. Freedom does not Require Motivational Self-Construction

In considerable measure, people shape their own personalities and characters through the decisions and choices they make in their lives. John Stuart Mill had 20/20 insight when he wrote that:

> The free will doctrine . . . [has] in view precisely that portion of the truth which the word Necessity puts out of sight, namely the power of the mind to co-operate in the formation of its own character.[8]

But, of course, cooperation is one thing, and formation another. Here, nature in the end predominates over nurture.

But if an agent's beliefs and values are determined by circumstances outside his control—and specifically what options he sees as available and how he evaluates them—then the acceptability of these options is determined thereby. And does this not abrogate his freedom of choice?

The answer is a resounding negative. It all depends on the source of these thought-determinative forces. Are they the product of external manipulation (conditioning, brainwashing, or the like)? Then freedom is indeed compromised or even lost. Or do those determining factors arise in the course of the ordinary, normal processes of through function that proceed without untoward external constraints and influences? Then the choice or decision remains free. For that is effectively what is meant by freedom—namely freedom from untoward interference with an agent's autonomy of thought and action.

In this context, it does, of course, need to be acknowledged that there is no precise line of division between normal training and acculturation on the one hand and indoctrination and undue influence on the other. But there is nothing unique about this—and nothing damaging. We have no precise line of division between trees and bushes, or between houses and mansions. But with such concepts the existence of problem cases falling into a gray area does not preclude their unproblematic applicability in the vast majority of ordinary encountered cases.

One often hears it said that moral judgment is appropriate only with respect to the things for which people are productively responsible. But this is overly hasty.

Thus, the core of Robert Kane's approach is the idea that a free decision for which the agent is fully (Kane prefers "ultimately") responsible must be such that the agent is also substantially responsible for the motivation that leads to the resolution at issue. But this seems too restrictive, since few if any of us are ever self-made men in point of motivation. Our motives come from our natural dispositions, our training "at mother's knee," our culture, or our education. Our formative milieu exerts a vast influence here, and we have little if any productive responsibility for its make-up. But none of this prevents those motives from being ours; instead, it is their acquisition by us that makes this ours. It thus seems more plausible to hold that to qualify as an agent's morally binding motivation it is required that this be *acquired normally by* the agent and not somehow *manipulatively imposed* upon him.

Nor does the absence of optimality entail an absence of responsibility here. Two categories of things are properly the subject of reproach or approbation by others and shame or pride to oneself—the things one *does* and the things one *is*. Only the former category is a matter of responsibility for producing; the latter is a matter of condition of being. But it, too, can merit reproach and disapproval. People make themselves only in part but have responsibility for the whole. If I am a congenital liar, I am, as such, every bit as rightly the target of reprehension by others as when I bring this aspect of my nature to expression in overt acts of deceit.

Galen Strawson has it that morally free agency is impossible because genuinely free action must proceed from one's thought and "one cannot really be said to choose, in a conscious reasoned fashion to be the way one is, mentally speaking."[9] But one man's *modus ponens* is another's *modus tollens*. Granting that mental self-creation is impracticable just does not eliminate free will; it eliminates the inherently unreasonable requirement of mental self-production to serve as a pre-requisite for freedom.

There are two ways of implementing the idea that it is insofar as the agent is a self-made man—even insofar as his own character and motivations are concerned—that his actions are *fully* free. One is to insist that the choices that shape an agent's motivating inclinations be entirely self-formed without any external value-formation (say, through the influence of parents, teachers, associates, etc.). This would be totally unreasonable and unrealistic. The world being as it is, this sort of thing does not—could not—exist. The other way is to see those external impetuses as mere *influences* rather than *determinations*, suggestions, as it were, that the agent is free to accept or reject spontaneously, in his own appraisal free of any further external impetus. (It is presumably in this sense that Kane's idea of ultimate responsibility should properly be construed.) Freedom thus remains in the face of external influence insofar as the agent is the gatekeeper of acceptability. In acquiring these motivations an agent makes them his own: acquisition is endorsement. From the moral point of view we rightly condemn the evildoer's malign motivations every bit as much as his evil deeds.

Consider the following plea:

> That putatively reprehensible action of mine is not something for which I can properly be blamed. It resulted from the motives inherent in my nature and character, and this is something optional. I did not

> choose it and therefore I have no responsibility for it. I didn't choose to be a congenital liar and didn't make myself one. My will is not really responsible for that lie: my nature made me do it.

This line of defense is simply ridiculous. The fact that we do not—cannot—choose or otherwise control our motivations does not mean that the decisions that issue from them are not free. On the contrary, it means that the requirement that freedom requires choice or control at *that* level is simply unreasonable. One cannot possibly impose upon any condition—freedom included—a requirement that cannot reasonably be met.

One's motives do not—and certainly need not—invariably be by-products of selection and choice; they inhere in one's nature, which Nature herself has made. The axe murderer did not request or select the drives and urges that lead him to act; it is enough for freedom and responsibility—and for moral condemnation—that he *has* them and *acts on* them. "My nature made me do it" is the basis for condemnation, not for exculpation.

The dictum "*Tout comprendre c'est tout pardonner*" gets it dead wrong. To trace the causal antecedence of a person's actions into his character, personality, or psychological make-up is not thereby to erase discredit from his misdeeds. At this point the analysis of Dickinson Miller is right on target:

> [Consider the act of a sociopath.] It does not remove our sense of its vileness to reflect that he was acting according to his nature. That is a part of why we are indignant at *him*. We intend to make him feel that his nature is in that respect evil and its expression insufferable. We intend to interfere with the expression of his nature. That what he did proceeded from it is not a disturbing and praise-giving consideration in the midst of our conduct, but the entire basis of it.[10]

And this is surely correct. For as Kant rightly stressed, inclination is the very core of moral assessment.

The thief may possibly try to argue: "You cannot appropriately blame (reproach, punish) me for that theft. It was not a free act of mine: my cupidity made me do it." But this is absurd for even granting that his cupidity played a determinative role; the fact remains that it was *his* cupidity—this constitutive aspect of his own very self—that was determinative. And since freedom is self-determination, that act remains free. And here there is no analogy with "My seasickness

made me do it" (throw up on your shoes, say) because an inclination to seasickness, unlike cupidity, is not a character trait and so not a constitutive feature of self (in the morally relevant sense). "My motives made me do it" is not an excuse from moral responsibility but rather its very foundation.

It is a tempting, albeit serious error to think that people only open themselves to moral judgment—to praise and blame—for what they do, that is, for the things for which they are productively responsible. For the reality is that people merit praise and blame not just for what they do but for what they are—for the virtues and vices that constitute their character and define them as the individuals they are. (Epistemically, of course, our only pathway to the latter, what people are, proceeds via the former, what they do—even as, our only epistemic pathway to the disease is via the symptoms. But character is no more a behavior complex than disease is a symptom complex. In both cases we have to do with ontological rather than epistemological matters.)

Moral condemnation finds a proper target of application both with action and with nature: we deprecate not only the lies but the liar. (And the same story holds on the side of approbation, *mutatis mutandis*.) The sociopath who delights in misfortune to others deserves consideration even when he does not produce it. The crucial point is that moral appraisal functions appropriately both in relation to what people do and in relation to what they are and thereby to what they *think* as much as what they *do*.

In his tract "The Devil's Fall"[11] St. Anselm deliberated about the angel's moral responsibility for his wickedness, and locates this in the fact that Satan willed to do evil. But now, confronting the question "Why then did he so will?", Anselm offered the intriguing reply: "Only because he willed. For his choice had no further cause by which it was somehow impelled or drawn, but rather *was its own efficient cause*—its own effect, if such a thing can be said."[12] The rationale for this somewhat strange doctrine seems to root in the idea that if a reprehensible decision were somehow caused, the responsibility for it would thereby be located outside the agent. There is, however, a perfectly practicable way of averting this conclusion, namely by locating the explanatory ground (the "efficient cause") of the agent's decision in his motivational make-up—his "character," if you will, which is a constitutive aspect of his very identity as the individual he is. He, of course, is not—and cannot be—responsible for *making* this identity of his; responsibility lies not in the fact that this is *what he makes* but in the fact that this is *what he is*.

On this issue Kant was entirely right. Intention and motivation are crucial for moral assessment. And we need not resort to the Platonic myth[13] of a birth-preceding choice of character to provide for its warranted assessment. For moral appraisal can relate to character directly via thought without requiring the mediation of action. Epistemically it may well be that only a person's observable acts can provide us a window into her character, but the epistemics of it is not the issue at present.

For lack of opportunity the bigot who thinks that those of another group deserve nothing but misfortunes or the psychopath who thinks that other people exist to afford him prey for mistreatment may never act on those evil convictions. Nor did either ever choose or decide to be the sort of person to hold them. (Character traits are not up for selection.) But these people are open to moral reprehension just for being people of that vicious sort.

Recent discussants of free will worry about the "unwilling addict" who is—much to his own dismay—a victim to his addition.[14] Is such a person really free or is he—like the sleepwalker or hypnotic subject—in the grip of alien forces beyond his own control? Where moral—rather than causal—responsibility is at issue we might well cut the individual some slack and mitigate our condemnation and reprehension. But this is rather a matter of generosity on our part that an intellectual apprehension of a fact of nonresponsibility, as when we incline to say things like: "That was not really he speaking, it was the alcohol in him." or even "That was not really his doing; it was the illness (madness, craziness, fury) in him that was responsible." (One hears it said that Swahili does not allow for saying "I broke the pot" but only "The pot broke on me.") All of us would, no doubt, like to offload responsibility for our misdeeds on circumstances beyond our control. But wishes do not create realities. We may not be happy with what we do and we may not be happy with what we are. But such discontent just does not annihilate responsibility.

In the root productive and metaphysical sense of the term, the acts of someone who is in the grips of a neurosis or compulsion—a "mental illness" of some sort—qualify as free. When we say that such a person "is not himself" and analyze an internal aberration to an external composition, we treat that person as morally unfree and not subject to demanded responsibility. This is an act of charity, not a recognition of fact. It is based every bit as much on a socially benign fiction as is the idea that someone less than eighteen years cannot bear responsibility for a capital crime. "His illness made him do it" is something on the

order of "The dog ate my homework," a plausible pretext to provide cover for an appeal for clemency.

In just this light, Dickinson Miller rightly deplored

> this mode of speaking [that] distinguishes the self from its wishes and represents it as under their dominion . . . [For] in fact the moral self is the wishing self. The wishes are its own. It cannot be discounted as under their dominion, for it has no separate predilections to be overcome by them; they themselves are its predilections. To fancy that because the person acts according to them he is impelled, a slave—the victim of a power from whose clutches he cannot extract himself—is a confusion of ideas. . . . I am not in my [free] acts passively played upon by forces outside me, but am enacting my own wishes ["choices" would have been a better term, since there may be reluctance] in virtue of a chain of causation within me.[15]

This is substantially correct. The individual is not the passive victim of her motives, but their actively possessive owner, implementer, and exponent.

4. Does Freedom Require Self-Understanding?

Spinoza held that we are not free when we proceed unobstructed to realize our desires because "men are usually ignorant of the causes of their desires."[16] Down the corridors of time have echoed his words:

> Men believe that they are free, precisely because they are conscious of their volitions and decision, and think not in the slightest about the causes that dispose them to those appetites and volitions, since they are unknown to them.[17]

In fact, however, a grave error is at work here. Freedom—that is, freedom of choice, decision, and action—is impeded by an ignorance of the causes of motivation no more than driving a car is impeded by ignorance about its mechanisms. And the ultimate *causes* of motivation—whatever they be—are simply irrelevant to their functioning as such, that is, as grounds for decisions.

Soon after the voyage of the *Beagle*, Charles Darwin wrote:

> The general delusion about free will is obvious because man has the power of action but he can seldom analyze his motives (originally mostly instinctive, and therefore now [requiring] great effort of reason to discover them . . .)[18]

Apparently Darwin thought (with Spinoza and perhaps Freud) that action is only genuinely free when it is activated entirely by recognized and rationally comprehended and approved motives. But this simply confounds *free* with *rational* agency. As long as the agent acts on his own motives—as autonomously developed in the normal course of things without external duress or manipulation—his action is free in the standard (rather than rationalistically reconfigured) sense of the term.

Self-understanding of one's motives is all to the good. Nothing can be said against it as such. But it just is not a prerequisite for free will.

5. On Willing to Will: Does Freedom Require the Will to be Self-Approving

Various German theorists since Schopenhauer have over the years suggested that true freedom is a matter not of *acting* as we will, but of *willing* as we will.[19] Along somewhat the same lines, one recent American theorist has it that "A person's will is free only if he is free to have the will he wants."[20] But this sort of thing is decidedly bizarre because wills are not really on offer, and few of us ever see a need to stop and ponder if we would rather have Mother Theresa's will than our own. With wills as with birth dates, one pretty well has got to settle for what one has. Thomas Hobbes objected to Bishop Bramhall "that a man was free, in those things that were in his power, to follow his will; but that he was not free to will, that is, that his will did not follow his will."[21] Quite so! To ask of one's will to come up with different results is an inherently impracticable demand that sets the will against itself. The will no more affords a separate agency for guiding the will than reason affords a separate agency for guiding reason. Each is a self-enclosed capacity.

It seems perfectly plausible to say:

- I could have acted differently—if I had decided to do so.

But in this regard action and decision differ. For it is no more than an empty truism to say:

- I could have decided (or *willed*) otherwise—if I had decided (or *willed*) to do so.

Nothing of any significance follows from such a tautology. Insofar as the idea of "willing as one wills" or "having the will follow the will" makes any sense at all, the issue is simply one of willing. In the end, willing to will does not really make sense. (To be sure, one could *wish*

that the circumstances were otherwise so that one did not have to will as one does, but that is an altogether different issue.) The reality of it is that our choosings and decidings just are not the sorts of things about which we make or need to make additional and prior decisions about willing to will. Freedom of the will does not require that we will to will: it does not require meeting the unreasonable demand of an inherently problematic presupposition.

The idea of a self-monitoring will that can turn against itself by wiling not to be as it is—by refusing to approve of what it wills and thus to desire that (some of) its desires were different—is as old as St. Anselm of Canterbury,[22] who saw such self-criticism as a mark of the will's freedom rather than an impediment thereto. Yet there are real problems here.

Free will pivots on the question of whether the agent can resolve his choices and decisions on his own terms—whether he himself controls the outcome by his autonomously unfettered deliberations. The larger question of whether an agent has the personality he would ideally like, complete with the motivational manifold he would ideally like, raises further and different issues.

To be sure, the motives astir in an agent may well not be things about which he is pleased and proud. But pleased or not, when the agent does overtly implement his motives and bring them to expression in action, he is acting freely. One is not passively victimized by one' motives; on the contrary, acting them out is a form of self-realization. The manifold of one's motivation is a key sector of that which constitutes a person as the individual he is: a salient element of his self-identity. To reemphasize: one's autonomous motives are definitive components of one's nature.

6. Does Freedom Require the Approval of Intellect and Reason?

Does the role of deliberation render the will subservient to the intellect? Or is it the other way 'round? Historically, there have been three schools of thought, separated in their view of the relation between the will and the intellect:

- The will is *subordinate* to the intellect in matters of choice and decision. The alternative presented to it by the intellect as optimal binds and determines the will. The will is thus subordinate to the intellect in that the intellect decides on issues of comparative merit, and the will accepts and implements the insights of the intellect. The rational judgments of the intellect thus determine the rulings of the will. (Socrates and Plato)

- The intellect is *subordinate* to the will in matters of choice and decision. When acting freely the will is at liberty to ignore the motivating consideration presented to it by the intellect. The will is a wholly independent agent: in operating freely it puts the rulings of the intellect aside and goes its own way. (Scotus and Descartes.)
- The will is *coordinate* with the intellect in matters of choice and decision. The intellect functions in a strictly advisory capacity. It presents alternatives to the will and offers its recommendation based on judgments of merit. The will of intelligent agents generally heeds this advice, but is not always free to ignore the motivating considerations presented to it by the intellect and is able—if so minded—to go off in its own way. (Aquinas)

The position we endorse here is essentially the third coordination view (except, of course, for not taking will and intellect to be faculties instead of functions). Willing and deciding are thus seen as diverse activities of a unified mind rather than as distinct faculties or agencies.

Deliberation is the mental process by which we pursue the Lockean project of resolving issues of choice and decision "according to the determination or thought of the mind."[23] We try to figure out—by however elaborate or cursory a course of consideration—what to do in the circumstances. However, the *cogency* of an agent's deliberations are irrelevant to freedom.

A will that decides on the basis of *some* subjectively endorsed "reasons" is not necessarily a rational will committed to acting for objectively *good* reasons. On this basis, Aquinas was wise to distinguish between a rational or natural appetite that "leads to some good thing existing in reality" and a psychic or volitional appetite that tends to the merely seeming good.[24] Appetite thus has a rational and a sensuous form, and on this basis will is something of a two-edged sword, with both rational/intellectual and sensuous/psychological versions. People make choices and decisions for reasons, but these are not necessarily good, valid, appropriate reasons. Even where an agent's intellect sees preferability, his will may nevertheless set this aside. Reason is a subcontractor that makes recommendations to the will, not its owner who exercises control.

Plato had it that the will is only truly under the agent's control—and thus only genuinely free—when it is directed to the realization of the good; otherwise, it is deflected from the course of true freedom by the influence of passion or emotion. We are "truly" free when (and only when) we act rationally, because otherwise we are at the mercy of the

passions and other irrational or at best extra-rational impulses. But St. Augustine rightly rejected this stance. He saw that it was necessary to differentiate between man's liberty to choose (*liberum arbitrium*) as such and his capacity for rational (wise, appropriate) choice, *libertas*. Freedom as such is freedom to be wise or foolish, rational or irrational.

Friedrich Engels had it that a decision is free when it is made intelligently.[25] But this decidedly overintellectualizes the issue and transmutes the *free* into the *rational* will in a manner more congenial to ancient than to modern thought. There is no point in confounding freedom with rationality let alone benevolence.

Of course, the definitive feature of rational agency is that agents have *some* reasons for what they do. But that freedom requires these reasons to be *good* reasons is simply too much to ask. In the interests of clarity it is thus advisable to distinguish between the *rational* choices and decisions that an agent makes for good reasons, and the *reasoned* choices and decisions that he makes for some reasons, be they sound or not. The free decisions of a rational—that is, reason-capable—being will indeed be reasoned, but they need not always be rational (i.e., made for reasons that are—or at least are seen by the agent as—good).

That the will is in *some* ways dependent on the intellect is clear on general principles. Were the agent to decide the facts of the case differently he would doubtless act differently.[26] For it is the intellect that must present to the will the range of alternatives over which the choice or decision is to be resolved. Then too, a matter of learning is involved in discovering the range and limits of these things that can be seen as lying within our control. Even with regard to our own bodies there is a learning process finding out about what it is that we can and cannot get them to do—and in the former case how to go about it. The will is certainly not self-sufficient in its operation. However, there is the other side of the coin as well. For as Descartes already stressed, our reason cannot determine beliefs without the will entering into it—looking at the intellect's recommendations and deciding whether or not to accept them.

However, while freedom and rationality are certainly not one and the same, it deserves stress that the demands of reason do not abrogate freedom: they offer us an opportunity to make wise decisions—an opportunity we will seize if we are sensible. The "dictates" of reason are dictates only for the individual we hypothesize to be perfectly rational—they are certainly not so in general. The course of reason

is one that we *can* take if we so choose, but not one that a free agent must follow by automatized necessity. As medieval deliberation about free will from St. Anselm onwards already stressed, while the will of a rational creature such as man should, of course, heed the injunctions of reason, it need not invariably do so: freedom is freedom to err.

But how does a rational agent handle the choice among the alternative options that he sees before him? Consider the analogy of making moves at chess. Among the *conceivable* moves some are practicable—allowed by the rules—and some are not. And among the *practicable* moves some are *sensible* and some not—the sensible being those which given the teleology of the situation (the object of the game) offer the best prospects for a favorable issue. Deliberation is the process by which this exercise of weighing matters of practicabiltiy and promise is carried out. Here we seek to winnow the available options so that, in ideal circumstances, one of them comes to be identified as the uniquely best relative to the object of the game and the personal vision of the individual player. *Free* choice is a matter of engaging in this process. Fully rational choice, by contrast, calls for carrying it out intelligently and sensibly, something that involves a good deal more than freedom as such. Man is a rational agent alright, but that means simply that he has a *capacity* for reason, and not that he will be reasonable all or even most of the time in matters of choice and decision.

Theorists ancient and modern to the contrary notwithstanding, an agent need not be wise to be free. If free will there is, it belongs to people at large and not just to an intelligent elite. Even as the wise are free to be wise, so the foolish are free to be fools. Ignorance and foolishness may be limitations, but they are not a mode of freedom-abrogating interference.

Neither is the human will bound to follow the dictates of passion (as some such as David Hume have thought) nor need it be bound to follow the dictates of reason /intellect (as various philosophers would like to see—Spinoza included). After all, *both* passionate *and* rational considerations can figure within the manifold of an agent's motivations. But the resolutions of his will are bound to follow the agent's own then-and-there assessment of the situation—the goals, wishes, or yearnings that serve to form and to configure the manifold of this agent's own motivations.

St. Thomas Aquinas had it that the will has the option to act for good or ill, although is only true to our nature when acting with the approval of reason.[27] This may be so, but it also lies in our nature to err. To be

sure the Platonic Socrates thought that no-one is wicked by free choice and that wicked things, when chosen, are selected *sub ratione boni*, with a view to some positive aspect and under the mistaken impression that they are somehow good because this aspect predominates. But for most Christian theologians this reliance or self-delusion makes far too short shift of human perversity and its potential for fascination with evil as such. Aquinas, for one, was emphatic that if we have free choice at all it must open the doors of possibility both to good and evil and to wisdom and folly.

Free will stands on its own feet—neither identical with *good* will nor yet with *rational* will. A free will is not constrained to opt for the alternative that reason presents to it as optimal: it is free precisely in that it is at liberty to opt for what it sees as *appealing* rather than *deserving*, to what it prefers rather than to what reason judges to be preferable (*worthy* of being preferred).

As Aquinas saw it, the human will by nature strives for what the intellect presents to it as the good, a doctrine which, naturally enough, acquired the name of Intellectualism. In opposition, Duns Scotus portrayed will as an independent agency able to insist on getting its way in the face of the intellect's indication of the contrary. The aims and ends on which the will fixes as guides to its resolutions thus need not themselves be viewed *sub ratione boni* but can be fixed upon by a will determined to have its own way. Naturally enough, this principle acquired the name of Voluntarism. (It is clear against this historical background that the present position's orientation is decidedly voluntaristic.) Against the position of Aquinas, Scotus argued that determination by the intellect would undo the freedom of man's will. As he saw it, since those matters of deliberative judgment—of what a man takes to be true and what he deems preferable—are outside his effective control, so will be the decisions in which they issue. Thus, for the will to be free it must be able to function independently and potentially in dispute of the assessments and appraisals of the intellect.[28] A free will must accordingly be able to proceed on its own, independently of the intellect. With Scotus, inclination alone settles the matter of free choice. Neither the comprehension of one's motives for favoring a given alternative nor a correct appreciation of its proper merits is required for free choice:

> In order that I should be free it is not necessary that I should be indifferent as to the choice of one or the other of two contraries; on the contrary—the more strongly I incline to one alternative—whether

> or not I recognize clearly that the reasons of the good and true are to be found in it . . .—the more freely do I choose and embrace it.[29]

And so, the voluntaristic tradition that stretched from Duns Scotus to Suarez to Descartes sensibly viewed mere inclination as a pathway to freedom.

Freedom is a democracy open to all, not just those whose motives are honorable, rational, or good. Only a decision process subject to the agent's own motives and evaluations (needs and wants, wishes and desires, whims and inclinations) can qualify as expressing the will of its *owner-operator*. And so for an action to qualify as free, its motives do not need a Good Housekeeping Seal of Approval from reason.

7. Does Freedom Require Self-Approved Motives?

Not only need reason not approve of an agent's free volitions but *the agent himself* need not do so either. Even an otherwise rational agent need not—and will not—necessarily act for reasons that are good (let alone optimal) in some objective sense, nor even need he do so for reasons he *sees* as good (let alone optimal). He will act for reasons, all right, but only those he accepts in the circumstances and deems compelling at the time. For your ordinary, everyday, less than ideally rational agent may well follow the siren call of inclination rather than heed the sterner call of judgments of merited preferability. Freedom is freedom to go wrong—even by one's own lights.

It makes perfect sense to say of an alcoholic that "He wants the drink but he does not want to want it." That said, however, it would be difficult to say how this differs in *meaning* from "He wants the drink but wishes he didn't" or indeed even from "He wants the drink but doesn't approve of this want of his." When this sort of thing happens with one's decision or choice, one somehow wishes to distance oneself from it. But a reluctant confession is still a confession, a reluctant lie a lie, a reluctant wish a wish. "My addiction made me want it; I didn't *really* want it" is a claim that one can make some sense of. But "I didn't *really* decide (or choose) it that way because my addiction made me decide (or choose) it that way" is not. Reluctance does not remove responsibility: in matters of wrongdoing reluctance may be a virtue but it is no anodyne.

So at this point Harry Frankfurt has constructively proposed a further step. He reasons that while we do not have control over, let alone responsibility for those formative influences that constitute our

motivation, nevertheless *in permitting them the status of being our motives* we generally do—and normatively should—let acceptance be grounded in approval. Thus, our responsibility for those motives is there not because we *create* them but because in accepting we *endorse* them. And if that endorsement is reluctant or unwilling—let alone distasteful—then we are not fully responsible. Full responsibility requires not only *having* those motives but *approving* of them. Approval of one's motivation is thus seen the crux of free agency.

The trouble with this otherwise sagacious move is that it affords the right answer to the wrong question. For the question actually before us is "Did the agent act voluntarily (willingly)?" not "Did the agent act eagerly (gladly)?" With free agency the issue is not "Is that child molester happy about his motivations or does he approve of having them?" but simply "Did those evil motives in fact lead to his evil acts?" With such a person we rightly condemn not only his actions but also those features of his nature that lead to them.

We need not *approve* of our motives—any more than we need necessarily *approve* of our talents and abilities. Very possibly we may wish that matters stood differently in this regard. The actual situation here may be out of line with our values and we may well feel that in an ideal world things ought to be different, viewing the actual situation as something that we would change if we could. We may not be happy with our penurious nature and wish it were otherwise. But such reflective "second-order" attitudes have nothing to do with willing. Whether gladly or not, what we decide we decide and what we choose we choose, wishes to the contrary notwithstanding. And the same goes for our motives: they are what they are, and we just have to live with that, like it or not. The fact that my values are such that they led me to want to be different from what I am may in some obscure way do credit to my judgment, but it certainly does not prevent my otherwise free actions from being free.

A person is free when his own motives govern his decisions and choices, irrespective of whether these motives of his are shaped by his idealized preferences. The idea of a dual self—the real (noumenal?) individual who may or may not approve and satisfy the motives that guide the mundane (empirical?) individual in making his choices—is too much a figment of theorizing artifice for the workday task of making sense of free volition. The person who disapproves of his own motives may lack authenticity and integrity. But he does not lack freedom. Nothing save his own deficiencies prevents "the better side

of his nature" from coming to expression. And one is not relieved of the moral onus of one's malign motivation by disapproving of them.

Nor does reflective self-disapproval diminish responsibility. A congenital liar may well say "I would like to be motivated by honesty, but (given my nature) just can't quite manage it." How far would this oddly laudable sentiment move us to letting him "off the hook" of condemnation on grounds of a defect of free will. Surely not very far!

Some theorists envision an ascending hierarchy of what we desire, and what we desire to desire, and—presumably—so onwards *ad infinitum*.[30] And so they reason:

> An agent's action is not really free unless it proceeds from a motive he *really* has. But *really* having a motive includes *approving* of having it, and then approving of this approval—all the way back (*ad infinitum*). And since this is impracticable and impossible, nothing an agent does is ever done in a way that is really free.

But having a motive no more demands approving of it than having a belief does. Instead of reaching the common-sensible conclusion that the imposition of an inevitable demand is unreasonable and absurd so that first or at most second-order endorsement should be seen as wholly sufficient for the motive attribution involved with free decisions, these theorists propose to toss the whole idea of freedom onto the scrap heap—all thanks to a failure to meet an impossible demand! As regards character and motivation, choice just does not come into it. Those wicked motivations are not what he chooses, they are inherent in what he is. Satan was not satanic by bad luck, nor yet by choice; he was satanic by nature.[31] Again, Susan Wolf writes that:

> In order for an agent to be autonomous [and thus free], it seems not only must the agent's behavior be governable by her self, her self must in turn be governable by herself—her deeper self, if you like—and this [deeper self] must be governable by her still deeper self, ad infinitum.[32]

Anti-libertarians seem eager to impose upon freedom of the will conditions that are patently unreasonable and unrealistic. In their eagerness to extirpate free will they transform Tertullian's *credo quia absurdum* into *posco quia absurdum*, replacing "I believe it because it is absurd" by "I require it because it is absurd." Saddling a position with an absurd demand is indeed a good way to refute it. But in the present case the saddle just will not fit the horse.

We have no alternative but to take humans as we find them. And for better or worse, some of the things we think and do can be a source of pleasure and pride, others a source of dismay and regret. And this goes not only for our actions but also for our motives—and indeed even our thoughts.[33] Moreover, it holds for our motivations as well—of some we are rightly proud (honesty), while of others the opposite is true (strangeness). Ideally, an agent will only make choices and decisions that he can and should approve of. Yet, however desirable this may be, such auto-endorsement has nothing to do with free will. We may—and should—respond with moral disapproval to the *wanton*[34] who gives neither thought to nor care for the quality of his motivation. Yet this has nothing to do with freedom. The will is no less free for inclining to a wicked rather than a laudable option, or to one that is negative rather than positive.

8. Buridan's Ass Issues: A Random Willfulness is not Freedom

One traditional conception of freedom bases the idea of free will upon that of reason-free *decisions*. A decision is free on this line of thought to the extent that it is not constrained by reasons. Accordingly, such freedom requires that the grounds for making the decision one way or another are insufficient for a rational resolution to be based upon them. Such a situation of insufficient reason can obtain either in contexts of total ignorance or in situations of balance and equilibrium where the grounds and/or evidence inclining one way or the other are effectively equivalent.

Given this undertaking of free decision, free will is then said to consist in the capacity for making such free decisions—the ability to effect a choice in the face of a ground-equivalency in whose presence there is no rational basis for preferring one allocation to the other. This is the sort of capacity that, according to medieval deliberations about Buridan's Ass, man has, but animals lack. God too, according to the medieval theologians has—and needs—such a capacity to act in the absence of deciding reasonings, since he will save people from eternal damnation and allow them entry into heaven even though their *claims* to eternal bliss are effectively zero.

Now while no sensible theorist would deny to intelligent beings the power to effect an arbitrary choice between equivalent alternatives, this is surely not the crux of any meaningful doctrine of free will.

There is and can be no meaningful sort of "freedom" that "liberates" the agent from his own motivations. For when we liberate the agent from his own motives, wants, and wishes what we have is not freedom

but the arbitrariness of utter indifference, not the product of what Kant calls *will* (*Wille*), but mere random *willfulness* (*Willkür*). Such a proceeding in insouciant indifference to the motives of the agent may in some sense be "free" but is also a *will* in name only. To "free" the will from obeisance to the agent's aims and motives, needs and wants, desires and goals, likes and values, personality and disposition would not be liberating but making it into something that is not just useless but even counterproductive. What rational agent would want to be harnessed to a decision-effecting instrumentality that left his motivations by the wayside? A will detached from the agent's motives would surely not qualify as *his*! It is a rogue will, not a personal one. A will that is authentically free has to be subject to determination by the motives of the individual whose will it is.

Detachment from any and all motivation is what has traditionally been characterized as "liberty of indifference." But as this very label suggests, the issue is not really free *will* as such but rather an unruly and arbitrary indifference, which "takes the bit between the teeth" so to speak and rides off on its own way, heedless of the determinative limitations of the agent's motivating deliberations.

Free will is not haphazard willfulness, nor yet should it be equated with unpredictability. In situations of choice or decision where acting differently makes a difference—where there is something different at stake as between the options and the situation is not of the Buridan's Ass, indifferent-alternative kind—we expect a rational agent to act predictably by doing the sensible thing. A. J. Ayer has put the point well:

> When a man's action seems to us quite unpredictable, when, as we say, there is no knowing what he will do, we do not look upon him as a moral [or better: *rational*] agent. We look upon him as a lunatic.[35]

Predictability is, in this way, a salient aspect of rationality. And given what we know of his aims and values, we expect a rational agent to act accordingly.

The best observational evidence that we can ever gather to substantiate the idea that an agent could have decided otherwise is that he did in fact decide otherwise on other occasions which to all discernable indications are substantially the same in all issue-relevant respects. But this, of course, limits us to Buridan's-Ass-type cases of an effective identity or symmetry among the available options. And such cases will have precious little wider relevancy since their purview is limited

to situations of equivalency, and these are few and far between and nowise typical.

These Buridan's Ass situations where there is a perfect equivalency of reasons for doing *A* and doing *B* have long muddied the waters of the free will debate. But even here there is no real "liberty of indifference." For even here there is still really only one single rationally cogent choice, namely "to decide between the alternatives randomly." The ultimate *outcome* of such a decision situation may differ (sometimes *A* and sometimes *B*). But the appropriate *decision* itself is uniformly one and the same, namely to make a random selection. And randomization is a uniform *procedural* response even though its outcome need not be uniform. So there is but one rational choice (to opt randomly) although this one choice has potentially different *outcomes* in that the *action* that results from it may differ. All the same, the fact remains that in the same circumstances the sensible agent may or will make the same decision. (So here is yet another reason for focusing on decision rather than action in deliberating about freedom of the will.)

Jean Buridan's example may well be right—an ass may conceivably starve between two equally appealing bales of hay. But a human free agent will certainly not do so. Or again, in suitable circumstances we may "choose" to put our free will into suspension and hand the selection among alternatives over to an unpredictable random device—say, a coin toss. It is less the operation of our free will than the prospect of our deliberate suspension of its operations that can render human actions unpredictable. (I can freely delegate my choice in various interactions to the outcome of a coin toss.) Free will can thus be deployed so as to defeat prediction. Once I realize that a predictor forecasts that I shall act in a certain way, I can deliberately defeat this. But it is one thing to have an option and another to exercise it. And nothing prevents free agents form having tastes, inclinations, and dispositions that render their actions often predictable and generally explainable.

It is certainly not that an agent's free actions cannot generally be predicted in advance. After all, if you know my tastes and habits you can confidently predict my menu choices. But the crux of the matter is that an act that is done freely admits of no reliable forecast that does not rest on a body of information regarding the agent's thoughts—his operative beliefs, wants, evaluations, and inclinations at the time. With a free act, no successful explanation can bypass the agent's thought.

All the same, where agents behave in erratic and unpredictable ways, this need not preclude predictive foreknowledge in the large. For as

long as those eccentricities cancel out in the collective aggregate and become lost in a statistical fog, we can obtain perfectly stable large-scale aggregate effects. The growth of a snowflake is chaotic but must always yield six points. Automobile accidents occur with randomness but yield relatively stable occurrence rates. And, as macroeconomics indicates, the unpredictability of free agents in some aspect of their individual comportment is perfectly compatible with the predictability of large-scale, aggregate effects. The salient consideration as regards predictability is not that free agents are thereby unpredictable, but rather that they *can* be so. For as that example of Buridan's Ass shows, an agent can effect decisions even in all absence of reasons—and do so without providing clues for others to make use of. Having the option of being comparatively opaque to predictive insight by others is one of the salient characteristics of free agency.

According to St. Augustine, the Pelagian heretic Julian of Eclanum held the view that for true freedom the will must be indifferent in point of motivation, poised in equilibrium between two perfectly balanced options, because only then can the will become active as a tie-breaker since otherwise it merely passively reflects the balance of motivating forces.[36]

With this sort of thing in mind, Medieval and Renaissance thinkers added a tie-breaking free will to speech and reason as distinctive capacities separating humans from the lower animals. One of the prime uses of the Buridan's Ass illustration was accordingly to make the point that an ass—unlike a human—would indeed starve in a situation of synoptic choice between two equal bales of hay because it lacks a free will. Nor could reason accomplish the job all by itself. For while reason would indeed insist *that* one of these alternatives be taken, there is nothing preferential to be said on either side with respect to *which* one. The point here is that even a rationally mandated choice need not always be resolvable by reason alone and that a free will is needed to break the tie by making a characteristic contribution of its own.[37] It is, however, one thing to ascribe to the will a freedom to act as tie-breaker in situations of *insufficient* reason for choosing among equivalent alternatives, and something quite different to insist that the will is free *only* in such cases because the will is subservient rather than free in opting for an outcome that reason indicates as preferable so that genuine freedom *requires* an absence of reasons.[38]

Considerations along these lines point to a doctrine of *decision libertarianism*, holding that the will is fully free only when it is subject to no determinative influence whatsoever, wholly at liberty to resolve

otherwise indifferent solutions one way or the other. But what we have here is in effect not a doctrine of *free* as much as a doctrine of *arbitrary* will. Along analogous lines, Isaac Watts saw the will as fully free only when it is "without any motive at all, and acts without motive on grounds of preference."[39] But this is all too clearly careless thinking, since such a will is not so much free as blind.

Of course, with altogether equivalent alternatives a rational will must arrive at identical results because rationality requires treating like cases alike.[40] But, of course, when that *resolution* itself requires selective randomness, the *outcome* may differ—as we have just noted. But this is now no different from the multitude of cases where Nature's responses can produce different results despite the fixity of the agent's contribution—as, for example, by having it rain or not where the agent takes his umbrella. After all, it is the hallmark alike of justice as of procedural rationality to treat like cases alike—insisting that there has to be a difference in conditions to validate a difference in response.

Reacting against the idea of motivationally indifferent will, David Hume argued at length that our will is never free in this sense, maintaining that whether we realize it or not our choices are unavoidably determined by inner forces whose unnoticed operation is subject to the same sort of necessity that is found in the causal operations of inert matter: "the union between motives and actions has the same constancy as that in any natural operations."[41] For Hume the deliberations of humans are as determinate as the motion of billiard balls, and the inner causality of deliberation functions in strict parallelism with the outer causality of mechanics. And so, as Hume saw it, even seemingly indifferent alternatives are never actually indifferent but involve some "hidden" difference that is able to provide a ground for preference. However, not only does this requirement lack any visible means of support, but even if there were, the existence of such a difference would be irrelevant whenever the agent was completely unaware of it.

Notes

1. William James, "Dilemmas of Determinism," *The Will to Believe* (New York: Longman's Green, 1897).
2. See Ryle (1949).
3. See G. Strawson (1994)
4. As with G. Strawson (1994).
5. See Hobbes (1654), Chapter 1.
6. Reid (1785), Essay IV, Chapter 4.
7. See Schopenhauer (1839).

8. J. S. Mill, *Logic*, Vol. II, Book VI, Chapter 2, section 3, ad fin.
9. Galen Strawson, "Libertarianism, Action, and Self-Determination," in O'Connor (1955), pp. 13–31; See pp. 15–16.
10. Hobart (1934), p. 19.
11. St. Anselm, *De casu diaboli*.
12. Op. cit, sect. 27. S I, p. 275. Italics supplied.
13. Plato, *Republic*, Book X, 617–21.
14. See Frankfurt (1971) and Dennett (1984).
15. Hobart (1934), pp. 13–14.
16. "Homines suorum appetitum causas communiter ignorant." Spinoza, *Ethics,* Book IV, Preface.
17. Spinoza, *Ethics*, Book I, Appendix.
18. Charles Darwin, *Notebooks*, M & N, p. 526.
19. They see the crux not as *Willensfreiheit* but *Wollensfreiheit*. See, for example, Windelband (1904) and compare also Mach (1906), pp. 182–83. The following sequence is of interest in this connection:

    - acting as we will
    - acting as we *would* will to will
    - acting as we *should* will to will
    - acting morallyThe line of thought implicit in this sequence leads back to the classical Stoic and Spinozist idea that only ethically/morally appropriate action is genuinely free. Yet with freedom as such there is really no need to go beyond the starting point.

20. Frankfurt (1971).
21. See Hobbes (1651).
22. See his *De libertate arbitrii*, sections 5 and 11. This tract is included in Anselm's *Opera Omnia*, ed. S. Schmidt, 5 volumes (Edinburgh: T. Nelson & Sons, 1940–61).
23. Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, Bk. II, chap. xxi, sect. 8.
24. Aquinas, *Summa theologica*, I-II, 8, 1, c.
25. "Freiheit des Willes . . . ist, recht verstanden, mit Sachkenntnis entscheiden zu können." Friedrich Engels, *Herr Eugen Dühring's Umwälzung der Wissenschaft, Erster Abschnitt*, XI Moral und Recht: Freiheit und Notwendigkeit, *Werke*, Vol. 20, p. 106.
26. See Thomas Aquinas, *On the Free Choice of the Will*, tr. Thomas Williams (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1993). Informative accounts of Aquinas' position on free will include Donagan (1987), Macdonald (1998), and Stump (1999).
27. "Radix libertatis est voluntas sicut subjectum, sed sicut causa est ratio." Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, I-II; qu. 17, art. I, ad. 2.
28. John Duns Scotus, *On the Will and Morality*, translated by Alan B. Wolten, OFM, and edited by William A. Frank (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1986).
29. René Descartes, *Meditations*, IV.
30. See Frankfurt (1971).
31. See Mele (2006), Clarke (1995) (pp. 408–21), and Kane (1999) (pp. 217–40).

32. See Wolf (1990), p. 14.
33. This matter of reflexive self-evaluation is stressed in the writings of Harry Frankfurt.
34. For this term see Frankfurt (1988).
35. Ayer (1954), p. 17 (Interjection supplied).
36. St. Augustine, *Contra Julianum*, I 78.
37. On the problem and its historical background see Rescher (1959/60). It might seem on first thought reasonable simply to delegate the choice to chance—say, by a coin toss. However, this will not do because this very process itself involves randomization. (Which alternative is to be awarded with heads and which with tails?)
38. It was this second, rather bizarre line of thought that led Luther to the contention in his *De serio arbitrio* of 1525 to insist that in matters of human salvation "Dei voluntatis nulla est causa nec ratio."
39. Watts (1778); compare the chapter in Edwards (1757/1957), Part II, section VI.
40. See Rescher (1959/60).
41. David Hume, *Treatise*, Book II, Part iii, Section 1.

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Compatibilism Regained: What Free Will Excludes is Not Agent Determination But Agent-Bypassing Nature Determination

Synopsis

(1) Free will is not incompatible with predictability. (2) Nor is free will incompatible with the principle of causality once we distinguish between free decisions *(which proceed outside that causal order) and free* actions *(which admit of being causally explicable). However, a broader Principle of Sufficient Reason also remains in place because choices and decisions remain explicable via motives. (3) In reaching a decision freely the agent indeed "could have done otherwise," but this formula must be interpreted with care because its analysis should not lead outside the realm of the agent's motivating thought. (4) Reasons impel but do not compel or constrain. An agent's deliberations effect his decisions and choices in ways that motivate but yet involve no compulsion or constraint. (5) Agency-geared determinism is not only compatible with free will but essential to it. And on this basis free will and determinism (albeit determinism of a very special—specifically* motivational—*sort) are smoothly compatible.*

1. Free Will is Compatible With Predictability

Having free will does not render one's actions automatically unpredictable. If I know your taste in books or in moving pictures, then I can confidently predict your selections among alternatives—and will probably be right much of the time. After all, there is no phenomenological (observational)

difference between a regularity engendered by a preprogrammed mechanism and one that is produced by a free agent who has (freely) decided upon following some rule or forming some habit. Moreover, intelligent agents are in a privileged position where the prediction of their own actions is concerned. Then too, we can perfectly well predict—though often only in somewhat general terms—how the people we know well will react when threatened, endangered, offended, or flattered. And we can safely predict of a sensible person that she will freely choose to do those things which are—in the circumstances—the sensible things to do. Accordingly, the operation of a power of free choice certainly does not mean that there *must* be unpredictability, but only that there *can* be.

In this regard, the game of chess is highly instructive. There are some moves that are simply impossible—ruled out by the nature of the situation. (You cannot move a rook *à la* bishop.) Some moves are so obviously ill advised that not even a tyro would make them. But various generally practicable moves are available to players as a matter of open choice. And in such cases it not often happens that no one—expert or not—can predict what a given player is going to do.

It is clear that past behavior patterns (e.g., in matters of voting) are highly reliable predictors for present behaviors in matters of free choice. And they do this because those behaviors come to serve as indicators for the agent's state of mind and thought. But they certainly do not enable us to bypass the agent's thought-mentality in explaining his actions. Free actions are motivated by an agent's thought and become predictable on—but only on—this basis. No adequate explanation or prediction of an agent's free choices and decisions is possible without involving the details of the motivating thought that figures in his deliberations.

2. The Explanation of Free Acts Through Agent Determination

As argued above, freedom of the will is compatible with a Principle of Causality holding all human *actions* to be explicable in the order of natural causality—those freely willed included. (But note here the emphasis on *actions*, in contradistinction to choices and decisions, which need to be explained in the motivational order of agent-production.) The motivational determinism described in the preceding chapter accordingly sees all of our free choices and decisions as explicable in terms of the deliberations that issue in them. On this basis, the Principle of Sufficient Reason to the effect that all facts are subject to cogent explanation—deliberation outcomes included—also survives an acknowledgement of free will. After all, the authentic decisions of an intelligent free agent

will have to emerge from the cognitive and affective situation of that agent—from what he thinks and what he "wants" overall, in terms of the totality of his information and motivation (aims, desires, etc.). An authentic free will must, in fact, be determined (albeit precedence-determined, emphatically *not* predetermined) by the agent's overall thought-condition as it evolves at the time. (When a determination of the will does not emerge from the agent's manifold of motivational deliberations it could not really qualify as being *his* decision at all.)

One recent writer has it that a supporter of free will must envision a radical discontinuity between man and the world he lives in, a discontinuity so radical that the whole universe and even the man's character and brain do not determine how his free choices eventuate.[1] But this hyperbolic doctrine is very questionable because a sensible libertarian will certainly accept a determinism *of sorts*—not, to be sure, by an agent's environing universe or even by his dispositional character but rather *by his own thoughts* (or deliberations). A doctrine of free will can certainly see those free volitions as determined, not, to be sure, determined *for* us by something external, but rather *by* us via our deliberations. The synthesizing of the various motivating factors at work in our deliberations into a determinative motive is the crux here.

And so, free agency does not reject determinism but requires a version of it, one that insists on locating determination in the agent himself. The movements of the chisel will determine the form of the statue, but they do not function independently of the sculptor who configures those motions. The sculptor makes those motions in (and for) producing a statue. Even so, the considerations of a deliberation will determine its outcome, but they do not function independently of the decider who deploys those considerations in (and for) producing a decision. And this outcome-determination by an agent's acts via his thoughts does not *abrogate* freedom, but rather *constitutes* it. After all when the agent determines his choices and decisions on the basis of his motive they do not function as independent factors proceeding separately from him.

Agent production is the crux here. An agent's thought is crucial to free will. Suppose that a certain agent faces an issue of choice or decision. Upon due deliberation he resolves the matter. We seek to explain the outcome—to fill in the blank "The agent resolves this decision-issue *X*-wise because . . . ." As long as the (correct) explanation of the action will have to place an essential reliance on the agent's reasons and motives—and in so doing place substantial weight upon the agent's conscious and unconscious thought process—we are dealing with a free action. The

proper contrast for (metaphysical) freedom is not necessitation as such but rather causal necessitation proceeding independently of the considerations of an agent's mind. For agent-production requires that the choices and decisions that issue from an agent's deliberations be crucial here, so that the causal efficacy at issue rests with the thought proceedings of the agent. It can, and should, thus be seen as a mode of "mental causation."

Free will and determinism can thus be reconciled through the consideration that determinism requires that "All occurrences are productively determined—volitions included," while free will requires that "My volitions are determined by—but not *for*—me."[2] For that second sentence rightly indicates that the "productively determined" of that first sentence cannot be glossed as having the qualifying addendum "by the causality of nature"—as classical determinism would have it. Authentic freedom of the will calls for distinguishing between the efficient causality of natural processes and the motivationally mediated agent causality of choice and deliberation.

And some such determination there must indeed be. For insofar as an agent's choices and decisions are *not* determined by his motives—by his likings and inclinations, wishes and purposes, and all the rest of it—they become disqualified from counting as *his* choices. As Dickinson Miller put it:

> Insofar as this "interposition of the self" [this agent motivation] is undetermined, the act is not *its* act. . . . In proposition as it is [so] underdetermined, it is just as if his legs should suddenly spring up and carry him off where he did not choose to go. Far from constituting freedom, the will has, in the exact measure in which it took place, the loss of freedom.[3]

A will that does not extract its resolutions from the motivating considerations that figure in an agent's deliberations is arbitrary, feckless—"willful" in the most pejorative sense of the term. As was already noted, such a will is not free but frivolous.

Immanuel Kant wrote:

> It is a wretched expedient (*ein elender Behelf*) to take refuge in the supposition that the sort of determining grounds of the causality according to natural laws provides for a correlative concept of freedom. . . . when the determining natural cause is internal to the agent.[4]

Kant insisted emphatically that it is the agent's motivation and not any agent-internal strictly physical-physiological causality of nature that

is the crux of freedom. And this is basically sound doctrine, although the idea of naturalizing this approach through a nature-integrated view of agent causality as a mode of efficient causality inherent in the capacities of a naturally evolved intelligent being had to await a later, Darwinian age. In any case, free volition in point of thought-grounded "causation"—or better *production*—with regard to *decisions and choices* is smoothly compatible both with a volitional freedom of *decisions* and with a causal determination of *actions*.

Viewed in this way, "agent causation" is certainly not a matter of "giving a name to a mystery" as one recent writer tendentiously puts it.[5] It is mysterious only if one brings to the issue the unwarranted and unrealistic expectation that all phenomena must be accounted for in terms of physical causality—that this alone is outside the domain of mystery. And this surely begs a lot of questions. For in the end, the idea at issue is just a matter of the productive activity of intelligent beings along lines that are—or should be—familiar and unmysterious to anyone who functions as such.

3. Freedom, Responsibility, and "Could Have Done Otherwise"

The idea of "can do" can take on two distinct meanings in the context of choice and decisions. One is a matter of being available as an option. "Can he choose vanilla?" generally merely asks whether vanilla is on offer. However, it can also ask something like "Is vanilla something he can get himself to pick—or is it so distasteful to him that he couldn't even get himself to consider it?" In the former case we have the *can* of *opportunity*; in the latter the *can* of *achievability*. It is this second that is crucial for freedom of the will. When in this context one asks "Could the agent have decided or chosen otherwise" one takes option-affording *opportunity* for granted and goes on to contemplate the issue of effective *achievability*. And thus, to say that *X* "could have acted otherwise" in matters of free will is not merely to say that other options were available, but that the existing conditions were such that the agent might well have availed himself of one or another of them, and would certainly have done so if his thought processes had proceeded along lines somewhat different from the actual—if he had paid more attention to this or given greater stress to that. Thus, "could have acted otherwise" comes to "would have acted otherwise if . . .". Thus, we have "Would have acted otherwise if he had thought somewhat differently about it" or again "Would have acted otherwise if he had reached a different decision about the matter."

But when we say of an agent that "He *might* (in the existing circumstances) have chosen otherwise" we confront a very different kettle of fish. For consider the hyperbolic supposition that he choose otherwise *in those very selfsame circumstances*. Is this supposition tenable? We cannot now avoid asking: Where and how must we readjust reality's course of things in the wake of this hypothesis? But if that choice was indeed free, then one place where we will have to make some changes is in the course of the agent's deliberations, and this at once alters the circumstances, effectively reducing that hypothesis *ad absurdum*. For if the agent's course of deliberation issued in the decision in question, then one clearly cannot say of an agent's free decision that he could have decided differently even if *everything* throughout the entire course of deliberation that issued in that decision had been exactly the same. To say that the agent "could have decided otherwise" must thus be construed to mean that he *would* have done so if he had thought there was warrant for it—it does not claim the prospect of a difference when the very selfsame motivating conditions are ultimately at work in the agent's deliberations. The *could* in question is in effect a *would-if*. In sum, the idea of "could have acted otherwise" pivots once more on that crucial matter of thought-control.[6]

Our everyday talk about human actions is often very loose and sketchy. We say "John opened the door," but what actually happened was a long story proceeding roughly as follows:

> John turned the doorknob. He pushed the door forwards until it began to move. And then he kept on pushing until a wider opening had been created in the doorway.

That initial statement presents as a single act something that is in fact a process constituted by many actions. It greatly oversimplifies a complex matter, some parts of which can be done willingly and deliberately and others unthinkingly. If someone had pushed John forward after he had finished turning the knob with a view of opening the door, our initial claim ("John opened the door") would be but a half-truth, because at that crucial juncture John lost control of the matter.

Consider the following sequence of theses:

- He could and indeed would have *acted* differently if he had so chosen.
- He could and indeed would have *chosen* differently if he had been so motivated.
- He could and indeed would have been *motivated* differently if his beliefs and/or assessments had been different—that is, if he had proceeded differently in the course of his deliberations.

- He could, and indeed would have deliberated differently if he had seen the circumstances of the situation differently.

This sort of regressive chain of hypotheses just does not lead outside the realm of the agent's thought. With free choices and decisions the agent's mind-operations are bound to be determinative.

In considering what is being claimed in saying that an agent "could have done otherwise" one must begin by asking: *As of when*? And at this point the distinction between predetermination and precedence determination comes into play once more. For those free choices fail to permit advance (*ex ante*) determination, because those determining conditions will involve *the entire totality* of what goes before, and this is never accessible in advance of the fact.

Clearly it cannot be after the fact; an agent cannot undo what has been done. Here Omar Khayyam got it right:

> The moving finger writes, and having writ moves on,
> Not all thy piety nor wit can lure it back to cancel half a line,
> Nor all thy tears wash out a word of it.

But, of course, those earlier times that precede the point of decision are something else again. With cases of "He could have done otherwise" there is often a point of no return prior to what he did, after which he could have *not* done otherwise. Thus, if John shoots Jack, he could have done otherwise prior to pulling the trigger, but once he has done so it's just too late. However, while this sort of thing holds for *actions*, it does not hold for *decisions and choices*. Here there just is no time gap between resolution and outcomes, which is why the distinction between predetermination and precedence-determination is crucial.

We sometimes cry over spilled milk. "If only I had done things differently—as I surely *could and should* have done! Why, oh why did I choose or decide as I did? I didn't have to do so, did I?" Of course not! You could have chosen or decided otherwise—IF (big if) you had been minded to do so. "But why wasn't I so minded? Surely I wasn't fated or predetermined to be minded as I actually was." No, you weren't preordained! But on the other hand your actual motivation really was not (in all likelihood) something of your own choosing or making. You can certainly *wish* that it had stood differently, but in all likelihood you could not have *decided to make* it so. We decide upon our choices, not upon our motivations. And yet those motivations are nevertheless yours—an integral part of your very being. You can dissociate yourself from them no more than from the time and circumstances of your birth.

An unqualified contention that an agent's freedom is lost when he could not act otherwise is untenable. For the basis of that inability is crucial. The contention is tenable when that inability issues from circumstances external to the agent in whose existence he himself has no involvement. But when these circumstances are self-inherent or self-produced the situation is different.

While one commonly hears it said that an agent is blameless when he cannot do otherwise, this is a dubious proposition. Given his longstanding jealousy and envy vis-à-vis *X*, *Y* cannot do other than rejoice in *X*'s misfortune: Schadenfreude in this regard long ago became inevitable with him. But the fact that he could not in the circumstance do otherwise nowise renders *Y*'s rejoicing free from moral reproach. The congenital liar cannot on suitable occasions do otherwise than lie, the kleptomaniac other than steal. But these defects of character are no defense against reprehension for their acts. Moral judgment—and, in this case, opprobrium—attaches just as much to what a person *is* as to what he *does*—and this functions even though the individual does not choose being what she is. True, the law will—for good reason—punish only actions and not dispositions. But morality is not in the same overcautious position: it is free to be more judgmental and demanding, critiquing both the disposition and the deed, both motive and conduct, both agent and act.

4. Reasons and Motives Impel But Do Not Compel

"My motives made me do it" is not an excuse, but an absurdity. The determinative impulse of an agent's own thought is nowise a matter of compulsion. On the contrary, the agent-autonomous determination of outcomes is a prime requisite of freedom. And this dependence on agent-internal determination means that freedom is not opposed to necessity but only to agent external necessitation—necessitation for the agent rather than by the agent.[7] Reasons and motives are not constraints: they *impel* but do not *compel*. And with impulsion by motives there is necessitation alright, but there can be no *ab extra* imposition that conflicts with an agent's being in control. An agent's values and motives are not forces by which he is passively controlled but instrumentalities through which he exercises active control.

Consider putative excuses having the format of "My *Z* made me do it" where *Z* is one's genetic endowment, one's culture-context, one's training, or (as the title of one recent book has it) one's neurons.[8] Such *Z*-factors on which causal responsibility is being offloaded is in each case something that is not of one's own choosing or making—something dealt out by the

hand of fate, as it were. And so, what the excuse-offering individual is endeavoring to do here is totally unrealistic. One cannot separate oneself from what one is. One's education, or culture-context—let alone one's genetic heritage or neuronic makeup—are not alien factors operating upon an individual from without—as would be the case with actual duress or even undue influence by others. They are, rather, factors formative for and constituent of the person herself. They just are not "external" factors that impinge upon her, but part and parcel of what she is.

Consider the contention:

> Man's will is a faculty that functions independently of his motivation and can dissociate an agent's choices and decisions from his motives and issue-relevant appraisals, enabling him to make different decisions and choices even in the face of one selfsame manifold of motives and deliberative assessments.

Something like this may well have been what Duns Scotus had in mind. But be that as it may, it is clearly untenable. A will that operates independently of an agent's reasons and motives is not a *free* will that puts the agent in control of the situation, but rather a *rogue* will that functions as an agent-detached force with that agent at its mercy. Rather than being an instrumentality of empowerment, the will is now a tyrant that holds the agents in subjection. Here the agent may own the will, but its outcomes are *his* only in a Pickwickian sense when its actuating impetus is outside the range of *his* motives.

5. Compatibilism Again

Is freedom of the will compatible with determinism?

The question is complex because both determination and freedom can be understood in different ways. The key question is: Determined by what? The basic situation is depicted in Display 1 and its upshot is clear. No version of free will is compatible with agent-exogenous causal determination. Metaphysical but not moral freedom is compatible with agent-external compulsion, and both sorts of freedom can be compatible with (duly construed) endogenously agent-internal impulsion.

What is crucial here is the contrast between a will that proceeds by the agent's autonomous motivation, and on the other hand a will that is heteronomously subject to agent-external pressures—be they personal via the will of another (duress, threats, seduction, hypnosis, etc.) or impersonal via such external interference as a mind-altering drug or drink.

Display 1

[CENTER HEADING: COMPATIBILITY RELATIONSHIPS]

COMPATIBILITY	RELATIONSHIPS	
Mode of Determinism	Mode of Freedom	
	Metaphysical	Moral
• exogenous causal determination	×	×
• agent-external compulsion	√	×
• agent-internal thought impulsion	√	√

KEY: √ = in principle compatible
× = in principle incompatible

Even the subtle Hume oversimplified matters unhelpfully here. For in pivoting his whole deliberation on a contrast between *freedom* ("liberty") as opposed to *necessity*, he neglected the pivotal contrast between *freedom* and *compulsion*, thereby overlooking the crucial difference between the internal necessitation of an agent's own motivation (wants, preferences, goals, etc.) and agent-external necessitation of manipulation, duress, deceit, or the like—the *imposed* necessitation emanating from outside the agent's motivational range. For it is not that the free actions of an agent are not determined, but that they are not determined by factors outside the range of the agent's autonomously constituted motives. There just is no conflict between free will and determination *of a suitable internally generated sort*.

On such an approach, an individual's act is to be seen as free not through its being *internally produced* through the agent's deliberations on the basis of autonomously formed motivating considerations. What matters is what transpires in the agent's thought and not how those considerations got there as long as they got there in ordinary manipulation-free ways. The circumstance that the motivating factors at work might themselves be somehow causality engendered would nowise abrogate that freedom. And on this basis, the sort of position generally characterized as *"compatibilism"*[9] becomes viable.

Leibniz asked:

> When one confronts a choice—for example to go out or not to go out—a question arises whether, with all the circumstances, internal and external—motives, perceptions, impressions, dispositions, passions, inclinations—all taken together, are still in a contingent state vis-à-vis decision or whether I am necessitated to choose, for example, to go out; that is, whether the proposition that: "In all these circumstances taken together, I shall choose to go out" which is [by supposition] true and is so contingently or by necessity.[10]

And his answer stands good to this day: it is indeed necessary yes, but by a conditional, thought-imposed necessity whose own basis is contingent, namely the deliberative processes of an agent—a relative and conditional rather than an absolute and categorical necessity.

Critical here is a distinction between the active causality that issues *from* the agent and the passive causality that is exerted *upon* the agent. Authentically internal self-actuation—where it exists in thinking beings—cannot be deemed other than a mode of freedom. A causality based in the agent's own deliberations and decisions—an agent causality—is not only compatible with free agency but required by it. This approach was adumbrated by Leibniz and subsequently elaborated by Kant and by Wilhelm Wundt, who argues that while free decisions are indeed determined, this determination proceeds via the processes that engender specific choices and decisions by way of extraction from psychological motivations. This approach provides for and implements the sensible idea that what free will must exclude is certainly not agent-determination, but rather any sort of agent-bypassing nature-determination proceeding wholly outside the range of the agent's mind.

Notes

1. Franklin (1968), p. 36.
2. Substantially this was the line taken by Dickinson Miller in Hobart (1934); see especially p. 7.
3. See Hobart (1934), pp. 6–7.
4. Kant, *Critique of Practical Reason,* Part I, Book I, chapter 3; Akad p. 96 (my capitalization), pp. 111–112 Meiner. Note that if that "natural" were dropped—or changed to "rational"—then Kant would see the result as truth rather than error.
5. See O'Connor (1995), p. 37. His overall discussion of the issue is illuminating.
6. Compare G. E. Moore's (characteristically tentative) suggestion that "could have acted otherwise" comes down to "would have acted otherwise, if he and so chosen." *Ethics*, p. 212.

7. Already Jonathan Edwards distinguished sharply between the "natural necessity" of (1) and the moral necessity of (3), with the former sort of necessitation abrogating freedom but the latter fully consonant with it. Edwards (1754/1957), Part I, Sect. 4.
8. Murphy and Brown (2007).
9. This way of seeing the issue—that freedom is not opposed to determination but to interference by way of manipulation, coercion, or undue influence goes back at least to Schlick (1962).
10. G. W. Leibniz's letter of 1707 to Coste in J. E. Erdmann (ed.), *Leibniz: Opera Philosophica* (Berlin: G. Eichler, 1840), pp. 447–49.

9

Mind-Matter Coordination

Synopsis

(1) Matter does not rule determinatively over mind; their relationship is one of reciprocity and partnership. (2) Free-will theory has no reason to deny that mind and brain are coordinated—that their operations proceed in lock-step over time. (3) The idea that "thought is nothing but brain activity" is fallacious. (4) For coordination—which is all there is—does not settle the question of causal initiative. (5) Coordination of mind and matter leaves open the prospect of finding initiative in either case, and in this regard there is actually a two-way street here. (6) The interrelatedness of thought and matter, of mind and brain, function in conjoint collaboration without a one-way physico-physiological determination of psychological process. And this leaves the way open for the thought control that is essential to freedom of the will. (7) The findings obtained by current brain studies are nowise incompatible with this.

1. A Two-Sided Coin

The salient characteristic of free agency is the exercise of mental control over bodily movements. But how is this possible in view of the intimate interrelation of mind and matter—of mental processes and brain-physiological transactions? How can the deliberate choice of people possibly function independently of causal determination by brain processes? Given its apparent dependence on the brain, how can mind possibly exert dominance over matter?

As psycho-physical determinism sees it, freedom of choice and decision is a thought illusion: the outcome of any choice or deliberation is a result of the associated physico-physiological processes of the brain, which are determined—and indeed predetermined—by the world's state of times long past on the basis of the prevailing scientific laws. However, the interpretation of empirical studies of psycho-behavioral aspects of free will is often seriously muddied by a failure to achieve

due conceptual clarity here. There is, after all, good reason to think that the interrelation of mind and body is two-sidedly reciprocal.

For mental states, events, and processes can and do have physical consequences. Your beliefs, desires, and preferences continue to incentivize and motivate action. And this happens not only at the macro-level of the person-as-a-whole, but also at the micro-level of brain/mind interaction. Here, too, thought can produce physico-psychological responses. Granted we here have a mind-body coordination, with these two resources operating in unison, and thereby have what one recent writer refers to as:

> The Correlation Thesis . . . to the effect that there exists for each discriminable conscious state or occurrence [in the *mind* of an agent] a theoretically discernable [characteristically coordinate] brain correlate.[1]

But correlation does not, as such, settle the question of causation, and even with a rigid, lock-step coordination there yet remains the question of who is in charge? Which is the dependent and which the independent variable? Who commands and who follows? And the tighter the coordination, the more pressing this question becomes. Unison of operation will not as such establish primacy of control. And this critical point is almost universally overlooked. For coordination is a two-way street. Changes in psychological states carry changes in cerebral physiology in their wake: when the mind frets, the brain buzzes. And conversely, changes in brain states carry changes in mind-states in their wake.

The automobile does not move along its route unless the wheels are doing just the right thing, but that does not put the wheels in charge. Likewise, the coordination of mind and matter—however tight—does not put matter into the driver's seat as direction-determinative. For here, things can go either way. One can think of mental activity as a matter of the mind's response to what the brain is doing. And conversely, one can think of brain activity as the brain's response to or reflection of what the mind is doing. But there is no reason to think of either of these as an inevitable arrangement, excluding the prospect that sometimes the balance runs one way and sometimes the other. Any adequate mind/body theory must accommodate two facts of common experience:

1. That the mind responds to bodily changes (drugs, fatigue, anesthetics)
2. That the body responds to many of the mind's demands (to stand up, walk about, hold one's breath, etc.)

Coordination does not settle the matter of mind control. Mark Twain's tendentious question "When the body is drunk, does the mind stay sober?" is perfectly appropriate. But then, the inverse question "When the mind panics, does the body remain calm?" is no less telling.

2. The Issue of Initiative

Consider the following oft-maintained contention:

> An act can be free only if its productive source is located in the thoughts and deliberations of the agent. But this is never the case because the tight linkage of mind-activity to brain-activity means that the thoughts and deliberations of the agent's mind are always rooted in and explicable through the processes at work in the agent's brain.

What sort of semantic bridge could one ever erect to connect phenomenological psychology and brain physiology? Granted, correlation and coordination are in principle no problem. But translation is too much to ask for: the two fields are discursively discontinuous. And with mere correlations as a tool the demolition of free will becomes close to unachievable. In the theater, I found Hamlet's gestures familiar but was surprised at his modern costume and willingly reflected on both points. What price brain physiology here? The physiological accounting of such an episode would be a very tall order.

Irrespective of how tightly the operations of the mind are interlinked with those of the brain, this does not settle—or even address— the issue of initiative: the question of whether it is mind or brain that is what Moritz Schlick called the "original instigator."[2]

To see what is amiss here, consider the classic freshman-physics setup of a gas-containing cylindrical chamber closed off by a piston at one end. The temperature inside the chamber is lock-step coordinated to the distance of the piston-wall from the fixed wall: when the piston moves, the temperature changes correspondingly, and conversely when temperature-changes are induced, the piston moves correspondingly. But this condition of functional lock-step correlation leaves the issue of initiative wholly open: one may either be changing the temperature by moving the piston, of moving the piston by changing the temperature. That thermodynamic continuance clearly shows that a lock-step coordination as such does not settle the question of the direction of determination—of which of those coordinated variables is free and which is dependent. The fact that two parameters are lock-step coordinated does not settle—or even address—the issue of processual initiative.

The idea that the physical-physiological aspect of a person is always in control over the mental is certainly false at the molar level. I can by deliberate mind-proceedings exert some dree of control not only over the motion of my limbs, but also over my pulse or the blood pressure in my veins. And there is no reason to think that this cannot sometimes transpire in my brain as well—that what and how I think may be in control over those correlated physiological processes, rather than the reverse. As we know full well from the example of a children's teeter-totter, coordination of itself does not settle the issue of control and leaves wholly unresolved the issue of which is the dependent and which the independent variable.

The crucial thing about a free decision is that it be determined not FOR the agent but BY him, and that this determination proceed from the agent's motives and beliefs (so that no adequate explanation of its occurrence can bypass these). Moreover, those motives and beliefs themselves must be autonomously formed (i.e., not imposed upon the agent by externally manipulated undue influence). Then too, the outcome of that decision must not be a foregone conclusion at some earlier stage that precludes the prospect of a "change of mind" on the agent's part. Finally, even though agent-deliberation might possibly be subject to a complete one-to-one correlation between brain processes and thought processes, the connection is subject to the further consideration of which is the dependent and which the independent variable in effecting the decision at issue. Subject to all these conditions, free will is altogether compatible with a coordinative "determinism" of sorts, namely one in which the agent himself is the crucial inaugurating factor.

All of those myriad illustrations of an intimate connection of thought to brain activity are simply immaterial to the issue of who is in charge. For what is involved cannot settle the question of whether mind responds passively to brain-state changes or whether it actively uses the brain to its own ends. Coordination as such is no help here. For even with a rigid coordinative correlation between brain-state physiology and mind-state conceptuality, the issue of which variable is independent and which is dependent—which includes changes and which responds—is yet unresolved. Be the coordination or amalgamation ever so tightly woven, the question of change-inauguration remains open. And there is no reason at all why this cannot be a two-way street with some transactions going in one direction and others in the other. Even in the case of lock-step coordination the question of free versus bound variables remains. Mind-body coordination does not, as such, put the brain in charge.

Consider the following argument. "Our thought-processes' acts correspond to physico-mental processes in the brain, which, as such, answer to nature's laws of cause and effect. *Ergo* those mind-detached physical-chemical processes govern and determine what occurs in the realm of thought as well." There is a deep flaw in this reasoning—a flaw that lies in a failure to realize that correspondence and correlation settles neither the issue of causation nor that of initiative.

Conscious thought and neurophysiological activity of a certain kind are (or can be seen as) invariable accompaniments. The realization of one is a necessary and sufficient condition for the realization of the other. But this invariable association is not to be thought of as a matter of causation. It's being high noon at a certain juncture in the invariable accompaniment of its being midnight twelve hours hence (be it before or after). But the one does not *cause* the other. The concept of causal connection is not broad enough to capture what is at issue with any and every mode of associative coordination.

It is not that brain and mind are distinct and competing operators or potencies. Like the teeter-totter of our analogy, they are simply two poles or polarities of one connected overall field of processuality with mental activity as its mental side and neurophysiological activity as its physical side. Even as the page now before the reader has its physical aspect (the ink-marks on paper) and its mental aspect (the statements whose meaning is being weighed), so our thought-activity has its brain-side in physiological activity and its mind-side in the realm of understanding. The printed words and their meaning are in lock-step coordination and go completely hand-in-hand, but in reality their coordination is not causal but purely symbolic. And yet they go completely hand-in-hand.

For the scientistic determinist, to be sure, agents are productively inert—what they do is always the product of what happens to them: they simply provide the stage on which the causality of nature performs its drama. The voluntarist, by contrast, sees intelligent agents as productively active participants in the drama of the world's physical processuality. And the reality of it is that mind-brain correlation cannot effectively be used against him.

It is simply fallacious to think that the intimate linkage between brain activity and thought puts the brain in charge of the mind. The brain/mind complex should be seen as an emergently evolved dual-aspect organization whose two interlinked domains permit the impetus to change to lie sometimes on the one side and sometimes on the other. For the *direction* of determination remains open: given these interlocked variables, the

question of the dependent-versus-independent status is wholly open and the question of *initiative* unresolved. And the fact that mind and brain sail in the same boat is no reason why mind cannot occasionally seize the tiller. What is at issue is a partnership of *coordination,* not a state of inflexible master-servant *subordination.* In particular situations the initiative can lie on one side or the other—it all depends.

And so, even if thought processes are in choc-a-bloc alignment with physical processes, as long as the initiative (in the dependent-independent variable mode) is sometimes with the mental rather than physical side we have all that is needed for free will. It is all a matter of where the activity starts and what stands at the end of the developmental line. And the free will situation is much the same. For the crux here is that sometimes thought can initiate action. When I read, the mind responds to the body; when I write, the body responds to the mind.

When my finger wiggles because I decide to move it, for the sake of illustration, then the mind-side of the mind/brain complex sets the brain-side into motion. By contrast, when I hear the alarm clock ring, it is the brain-side of the mind/brain complex that alerts the mind-side to a wake-up call. The interlinkage at issue with the mind/brain amalgamation leaves the issue of the *direction* of motivation—be it brain-initiated mind receptivity or mind-inaugurated brain responsiveness—as an issue open to further resolution. With agent causation originating in the mind, the agent is active; with physical considerations originating in the brain, the agent is passive. Both are perfectly possible. And each happens some of the time with neither enjoying a monopoly.

With any system in which there are functionally coordinated factors (be they temperature/pressure or supply/demand or whatever) a change in the one can engender a reciprocal change in the other. The relationship of lock-step coordination at issue is open to two-way implementation according as it is a change in parameter No. 1 with the conclusion in an accommodating change in parameter No. 2, or the very reverse. As even so simple a contrivance as a children's teeter-totter shows, lock-step coordination leaves the issue of control—of independent versus dependent variable—entirely open. And there is no reason to think that the situation at issue with mind/brain interlinkage is any different from the general run in this particular respect.

There is good reason to see the mind-brain interlinkage in just such terms. And here too, the linkage as such does not set a fixed direction to the initiative and control of changes. Anger the individual, and characteristic patterns of brain activities will ensue; create a characteristic

pattern of activity in the brain (say by electrical stimulus), and the person will respond by feeling angry. Yes, there indeed is a tight correlation, but productivity functions along a two-way street. The correlation of mind and brain is no more an obstacle to thought-initiated physical responses than it is an obstacle to the evocation through thought responses of physical stimuli. My annoyance at a pin-prick is a triumph of matter over mind; my extraction of the pin, a triumph of mind over matter.[3]

What we have here, then, is a situation of coordination and reciprocity rather than that of a unidirectional dominance/subordination. Being anxious can make the pulse race; but then again, sensing one's pulse racing can induce anxiety. The interconnection and interaction of mind and body can work both ways. Granted, when the brain is dead, the mind no longer works. But then, as long as the mind is working, the healthy brain responds. Thought is not an epi-phenomenon to physical processes but a co-phenomenon coordinate with certain ones among them. Thinking is not something the brain does: it is done by a mind that uses the brain as *its* instrument.[4]

Of course the mechanics of physical processes cannot be left aside. Take newspapers. They are produced entirely by the operations of mechanisms. Every letter in every paper can be accounted for mechanically. But in tracing back the causal chain of development one will eventually reach a level of extramechanical, and specifically human inputs. So it is with the operator of brains and bodies (lips and fingers included). Nevertheless, in explaining what those lips say and what those fingers write one will ultimately come to a point where thought indicates processes within those lock-step coordinated machinations of the brain-mind complex.

Obviously if the outcome of a decision is the result produced by processes—be they physical or psychological—over which the agent has no control, processes which play themselves out independently of the agent's wishes, decisions, and motives, then that decision can hardly be characterized as free. But insofar as the world's processuality includes and encompasses the agent's witting volitional and motivational states and activities there is no reason to disqualify the agent's decision—however closely coordinated to *such* factors—from counting as free.

3. The Brain Causality Fallacy

Consider the idea that "thought is nothing but brain activity," which runs along roughly the following lines:

> An act can be free only if its productive source is located in the thoughts and deliberations of the agent. But this is never the case

> because the tight linkage of mind-activity to brain-activity means that the thoughts and deliberations of the agent's mind are always rooted in and explicable through the processes at work in the agent's brain.

To see what is amiss here consider the situation of two small boys on a teeter-totter or, alternatively, a pulley wheel with weights suspended on either side. Here the up-or-down motion of the one side is inseparably tied to the corresponding motion of the other side. And this illustrates the larger point.

All of those myriad illustrations of a condition between thought and brain activity are simply immaterial to the issue of who is in charge. For what is involved cannot settle the question of whether the mind responds passively to brain-state changes or whether it actively uses the brain to its own ends.

For the determinist, to be sure, agents are productively inert—what they do is always the product of what happens to them: they simply provide the stage on which the causality of nature performs its drama. The voluntarist, by contrast, sees intelligent agents as productively active participants in the drama of the world's physical processuality. And the reality of it is that mind-brain correlation cannot effectively be used against him. It is simply fallacious to think that the intimate linkage between brain activity and thought puts the brain in charge of the mind.

But if mind as well as matter can seize the initiative with respect to human action so that we can act in the mode of agent causality, while nevertheless all human actions can be explained on the side of natural causality, then we effectively overcome the Kantian obstacle of reconciling the two modes of causality.[5]

In such an approach, the brain/mind is seen as an emergently evolved dual-aspect organization whose two interlinked domains permit the impetus to lie sometimes on the one side and sometimes on the other. For the direction of determination, so far, remains open. Given these interlocked variables, the question of the dependent-versus-independent status is wholly open and the question of initiative unresolved. And the fact that mind and brain sail in the same boat is no reason why mind cannot occasionally seize the tiller. What is at issue is a partnership of coordination, not a state of inflexible master-servant subordination. In particular situations the initiative can lie on one side or the other—it all depends.

But on what? How is one to determine where the initiative lies? Well—think again of the teeter-totter situation. Does the one side rise because its occupant pushes up, or does the other side lower because

someone heavier is now sitting on it? The system itself, taken in isolation, will not answer this question for you, but the wider context—the overall causality synoptic and dynamic context—will decide where the initiative lies. It is all a matter of where the activity starts and what stands at the end of the causal line. And the free will situation is much the same. When I read, the mind responds to the body; when I write, the body responds to the mind.

4. A Pivotal Duality

The mind not only processes information, it processes affectivity as well, seeing that we have pro or con reactions to many acknowledged facts. (We not only accept that snake in the corner, but are horrified about it.) And moreover, the mind can initiate action—as in situations of preplanning.

This is not the place to articulate a full-scale philosophy of mind. The detail of mind-brain coordination will not preoccupy us here.[6] All that is requisite for present purposes is (1) that there is a tight linkage of mind-brain coordination, and (2) that when a state-change occurs in this context, the initiative for it can lie on either side. We need not enter into detail at a level that transcends these rudimentary basics. What matters here is this: mind clearly cannot do the work of matter—it cannot on its own produce snow or ripen tomatoes. Nor, it would seem, can matter do the work of mind: it cannot read books or solve crosswords. And yet the two are clearly connected. When the mind decides to raise the hand, that hand moves; when drugs debilitate the mind, the body collapses. Clearly there is *interaction* here—partnership of coordination in which the process of a change in psycho-physical states can be initiated on either side is critically important in the present context. For it opens the way to seeing those free decisions as a crucial productive contribution of mind to the world's panoply of occurrence.

Doctrinaire materialism views mental action as a systemically subordinate response to the functioning of matter. Doctrinaire idealism views matter as ultimately mind-subordinate—the mere thought-projection of a mind. But more realistic than either is a theory of mind-matter coordination that sees the two as reciprocally conjoined, functioning as products of a complex, two-sided interaction where the ball of change-induction initiation is sometimes in one court and sometimes in the other. In such an approach, the brain/mind is seen as an emergently evolved dual-aspect organization whose two interlinked domains permit the impetus to change to lie sometimes on the one side and

sometimes on the other. For the *direction* of determination, so far, remains open in that dual-aspect perspective.

Consider a group of ball bearings spread out on a stretched rubber sheet. You now have a clearly correlative system—move the ball bearings, and the shape of the sheet changes; alter the shape of the sheet, and the ball bearings will move accordingly. To a large extent, the mind and the brain are coordinated in this way: sometimes as the mind functions, the brain responds correspondingly; sometimes as the brain functions, the mind responds. There is always coordinative agreement, but sometimes the one potency is in control of change and sometimes the other. Brain activity often controls the mind's thought, but thought sometimes sets the brain into responding.

On this basis, mind-body coordination is seen not as an externally managed pre-established harmony, but as an internally assured co-established alignment—a dual-aspect operation, if you will. Even as what is for the paper a squiggle of ink is for the reader a meaningful word, so one self-same psychophysical process is for the brain a *signal* (a causal stimulus) and for the mind a *sign* (a unit of meaning). Or again, one self-same process, the ringing of the dinner gong, has one sort of significance for the auditory facilities of the guests and another for their mindset. Such analogies, while imperfect, should help to convey the general idea of phenomena that have an inherent duality of coordination.

The mind, so regarded, is a hermeneutical engine. For only a mind can operate the symbolic process that transforms stimuli into meanings. Those physical inclinations are the *occasion* and perhaps even in some manner the *productive cause* of the interpretations at issue, but they are not the *bearers* of its substantive meaning-content. For that requires a very different level of understanding and a very different framework of conceptualization. Yet, nevertheless, the mind no more functions independently of the brain than the expressive mood of the visage can smile Cheshire-cat-like without the physical face. And yet that physical face can achieve no meaningful expression in the absence of a psychological mood to express.

When thought leads to action, it is not the two fundamentally different *kinds* of potency that are at work. The productivity of agency (thought control) and the causality of nature (brain control) are two sides of the same coin, as it were—two inseparably conjoined aspects of one complexity, multifaceted processes within the repertoire of an organism of a certain (human) sort. The changes at issue flow from one

unified agency. It is just that the actuating impetus to those changes in the one case lies at the pole of thought processes and in the other case at the pole of brain processes. And so when the mind has the initiative, the brain does not *react*, it aligns—and conversely so when the mind indicates.

To get a grip on what is at issue with freedom we shall have to dig deeper and look beyond physical causality. As long as an agent's actions cannot be explained without reference to (suitably structured) correlative mental processes—irrespective of how they themselves may have come about—(metaphysical) freedom of agency cannot be ruled out. Whether these mental processes themselves have physical causes is immaterial. The situation is as with any other psychophysical transaction such as taste or smell or vision. A decisional response, like a perceptual response, is not unravelled as such by its having psychophysical accompaniments.

After all, those features of reality that come to light in our human phenomenological experience are not annihilated by the fact that those experiences are correlative with the brain's psychological processes: the brain reflects those aspects of reality—it tracks the difference between the ripe tomato's red and its unripe predecessor's green and does not create it.

On the issue of which is in charge, mind or brain, thought or matter, traditional philosophizing has almost always taken an all-or-nothing approach. Materialistic determinists from classical atomism to the time of Hobbes, La Mettrie, and Laplace put matter in charge; idealists from Socrates to Berkeley and Lotze put mind in charge.[7] For some reason the commonsensical idea that in some transactions the one is in control and in others the other had little appeal for philosophy's endless succession of absolutists. But in the end, there is really no reason to opt for an all-or-nothing resolution. What is at issue here is, in principle, a two-way street.

5. Mind-Brain Interaction Works by Coordination, Not by the Causality of Nature

Here then lies the key to resolving the paradox of reconciling the two modes of interactions that have vexed modern philosophers from Descartes to Kant and beyond.[8] For we now have a straightforward answer to the questions of how the mind comes to engender physical operations. When I mentally decide to wiggle my fingers a few seconds hence for the sake of an example, how is it that my body responds to

this purely mental transaction? The answer is that it doesn't because no "purely mental" transaction is at issue. Thought always has its correlative in the domain of brain physiology.[9] And so an individual's so-called "purely mental intention" is not really something *purely* mental at all because it stands coordinate with a mind-brain amalgamating physico-physiological intention-state. The physical cause of that wiggling response is not something "purely mental" but the physical side of that dual-aspect amalgam.

It must, however, be reemphasized that what actually occurs in such transactions is a matter less of causality than of coordination. In his classic paper of 1934, Dickinson Miller saw the matter quite clearly:

> [In choosing or deciding] the mental process is paralleled in the brain by a physical process. The whole [two-sided] psycho-physical occurrence would then be the cause of what followed, and the psychic side of it—the mental struggle proper—a con-cause or side of the [overall, two-sided] cause. To-morrow's configuration of matter [i.e.., the physical result of an action] will [then] have been brought about by a material [i.e., physical] process with which the mental process was inseparably conjoined.[10]

And so, when an agent acts, there is no need to dream up a Cartesian category-transcending impetus of thought upon matter. The material eventuations are produced materially, by the physical side of the two-sided mind-matter amalgam at issue in psychophysical processes. And the same with thought processes. Each component functions in its own order, but the coordinate linkage of the two moves them in lock step.

But what could account for the fact that on one particular occasion the initiative lies with the mind and on another it lies with the brain? Here we need to look to the wider structure of temporal context of occurrence in its more comprehensive Gestalt. If what I do arises in response to drink or drugs, then it is clearly the brain that is in charge. On the other hand, if it is a matter of careful deliberation and painstaking weighing of alternatives, then it is clearly the mind that is in charge. It all depends on the same sort of contextual analysis that is at issue with the discrimination between dependent and independent parameters in physical-process situations.

The causal deliberations of the ancient Greeks were predicated on the idea that only like can cause like. The idea that factors that are as different *conceptually* as night and day could nevertheless influence one another *causally* was anathema to them. But the reality of it stands

otherwise. Motion creates heat via friction; sounds engender salivation by Pavlovian conditioning. Nevertheless, that ancient idea of causal homogeneity continued to exert influence as late as Descartes with his Chinese-wall separation of mind from matter. However, the revolution in causal thinking launched by David Hume changed all that and the idea of cross category causation no longer seems all that odd to us. We nowadays do not—or should not—see any inherent impossibility that in the order of causal production physical processes should engender mental responses—or the other way around.[11]

Philosophers often regard it as an obstacle to theories of mind/brain coordination that the mind functions on the basis of *reasons* in the psychic order (ψ), while the brain functions on the basis of physico-psychological *causes* that function in the physical order (ϕ). For as they see it, reasons are something so radically distinct from causes that "never the two shall meet." In their haste to get on with their analysis they overlook the fact that the mind's concern actually is not with reasons themselves but with *what is seen or accepted as such*, and that "accepting something as a reason" is just exactly one of those double-aspect ψ-ϕ amalgamating states around which a theory of mind/brain coordination resolves. That what the mind *sees* as a reason for something by and large is indeed actually so is nothing for which individual agents are in any way responsible; it is the consequence of the evolutionary procedure that equips agents with their cognitive resources.

Accordingly, the transition from one (internal) psycho-physical state ϕ_1/ψ_1 to another ϕ_2/ψ_2 can occur along very different pathways. It can be a matter of physical necessitation where the transition $\phi_1 \rightarrow \phi_2$ is in control and the ψ-component is carried along as an inactive passenger. Or it can be a matter of agent control where the transition $\psi_1 \rightarrow \psi_2$ is paramount and the ϕ-component is carried along in its wake. The transition in question thus has two very different forms, one of nature-causality and physical necessitation, and the other of agent-causality and thought-control. When I avert my finger from a pin-prick, we have the one sort of case; when I wiggle it for the sake of a philosophical example, we have the other. And in those ϕ_1/ψ_1 to ϕ_2/ψ_2 transitions where mind responds to physiological changes it (the mind) can take physical stimuli as inputs and interpreted meanings (messages, information) as outputs. In this way the mind is a hermeneutical engine.

And so, regardless of how tight the correlative connection of mind and matter may be, there is no ground for construing this circumstance as precluding the efficacy of mind in effecting change, and no

reason to refrain from maintaining that it is sometimes mind rather than matter that affords the independent variable that takes initiative in the inauguration of change. And it is just this that is required for freedom of the will.

The reality of it is that even if *every mental act (and therefore every decision) has a physico-psychological correlate or counterpart*, the prospect of free decisions yet remains open.

For consider the following specification:

> A decision D at time T is unfree (i.e., is non-mentally or physico-psychologically predetermined) iff there is some group of T-anterior physical states some of which themselves lack mental correlates (be they conscious or subconscious), and which collectively determine (and so presumably cause) the physical state D_p that is the physical-state correlate of D.

But now, even if we accept the hypothesis state above, it fails to follow that decisions must always be unfree.

For consider the following further specification:

> Event E that occurs at time $T + \Delta$ (with $\Delta \geq 0$) is a physically spontaneous eventuation as of time T iff (1) at every time after t the occurrence of E is physically determined, while nevertheless (2) at no time prior to t is its occurrence physically determined.

The natural sciences are replete with such events in regions there choice or chaos are operative. (Think, for example, of Schrodinger's cat.)

Now even if every mental act (and therefore every decision) has a physico-psychological correlate, there is nothing to preclude the prospect that this occurrence should be a physically spontaneous eventuation in the just-specified sense. And just this is the crux of free will advocacy—to insist that the physical correlate of the mental state of "arriving at the decision to do X" will (at least sometimes) fail to be physico-psychologically predetermined.

And, of course, the partisans of free will do not contend that all of our deliberated decisions are made freely, but only hold that some of them are.

To be sure, if mind were "nothing but" the machinations of matter—if brain physiology were all there is to it, and ψ could be eliminated from ϕ/ψ coordination—then mind would never be able to do this characteristic work of providing a bridge for the domain of physical processes

to the domain of ideas. We would never get from here (*physicality*) to there (*thought*): all possibility of achieving meaning, significance, information, would be lost. Whoever insists on seeing mind as totally "reduced" to matter—dismissing mental options as "nothing but" the machinations of matter—thereby excludes himself from the conceptual domain. And at that point there would be lost not only freedom of the will but a great deal more as well.

6. Libet Problems

Many—though certainly not all—physiological brain states are controlled via systematically corresponding mind states (in the region of conscious and subconscious thought). Clearly when an agent's decision (let alone action) is entirely predetermined solely and wholly by brain physiological states that lack such mental correlates, such a decision (or action) will not possibly qualify as (metaphysically) free. To qualify as such it is necessary (though entirely not sufficient) that predetermination is to some extent reliant on thought.

In a much-discussed group of experiments, the neurophysiologist Benjamin Libet examined the temporal aspects of brain physiology in decision making (specifically investigating a subject's decision whether or not to activate a key-tap). By electromagnetic sensoring he found that brain activity indicated that such "freely voluntary acts" were preceded by a specific electronic discharge in the brain (which was duly designated as the "decision readiness potential") coming some 550 milliseconds beforehand, although the agent himself only becomes aware of this act-decision some 200 milliseconds before acting.

The experiment at issue has it that at a time of his own choosing, an agent spontaneously and deliberately self-initiates a certain action (the pressing of a key that closes an electrical current). The finding of the experiment is that the agent's awareness of making this decision is unknowingly preceded (by a very small interval) by a spark of preparatory brain activity (the so-called "readiness potential"). And this "readiness-potential inauguration" (RPI) is the invariable precursor to what would otherwise be seen as the agent's "free decision" to perform the act at issue. These findings appear to suggest that in circumstances of this sort a subject's conscious awareness of an act decision only appeared after (by a minute period of time) a point at which the issue is already unconsciously resolved.

Some interpreters (Libet himself apart) then view this situation as contradicting of free will.[12] As they see it, the brain activity reflected

in RPI is the real cause of the act, with the agent's thought processes riding as a stowaway passenger on a train of causality operated by other factors. For in these cases the course of events appears to begin in the brain unconsciously well before the person consciously decides that he wants to act.

However, the matter is not quite so straightforward. For one thing it could well be that that potential-inauguration (RPI) is simply the first part of a single interpreted unit of process that is temporally indissoluble but only the last part of which rises above the level of conscious awareness. And where occurrences are not instantaneous in time but come in small trans-temporal droplets, this coordinative situation can also obtain with the earlier part of the unity exerting no *causal* priority over the latter. One must distinguish between backward causation (a scientific bugaboo) and noncausal connectivity (to which science neither does nor can have valid objection). (If today is Monday, yesterday has to be Tuesday, but the one does not productively engender the other either way.)

The aspect of Libet's experiments that challenges the idea of free agency is their indication that

- The agent's brain-state assumes a form that is typical for and indicative of action-at-time-*t*

and this happens at some time before

- The agent's *conscious* mind-state indicates a connection that action-at-time-*t* is (freely) decided upon

It thus appears that the inauguration of that "free" action precedes any awareness of its being decided upon, so that thought reports rather than inaugurates the action.

In Libet's experiments, then, the agent's first conscious awareness of his decision regarding whether or not to act comes only somewhat after its outcome is already a settled matter at the level of brain-physiological indication. To all appearances here, the brain activity predetermines decision outcomes, and does this somewhat *before* the matter is settled in conscious thought.[13]

But this state of affairs does not really serve to rule free decision out of the picture. For it can yet survive via several prospects:

Prospect 1: *Subconscious deliberation*. The agent's brain state reflects a thought condition of issue resolution of which the agent is not as yet

aware. (Thus, in serving at tennis, the agent controls the coordination between his left-handed ball-toss and his right-handed racket motion without being aware of it.)

Libet's experimentation accordingly could *not* show that the agent's act is not free in being determined entirely by factors outside the agent's own mind-state. At best and most it shows that in cases of the sort at issue most or all of the act-determinative functions are *subconsciously* operated.[14] And, of course, an agent's subconscious thought processes are not external to him in a way that blocks free agency. (I write these lines freely but without any explicit awareness of the processual details involved in writing.)

Prospect 2. *Compounding*. That initial brain-state is coordinate with its subsequent mind-states in one single compound and unified whole, a cross-temporal unit that is not a sequence of separate events. (Thus, when I write the word *cat*, that initial *c* is for me simply one early state of a single compound event ("writing CAT")—however different it may look to you who may not realize early on that that's what I am actually doing.)

When a unified auto is driven in reverse, its rear arrives at its destination first, before its front, and will do so even if the motor power is supplied by the front wheels. With processes that transpire not in a succession of instants but in temporal chunks, the order of time does not replicate the causal order.

As long as brain physiology and thought are chock-a-block coordinated, the issue of control remains undecided. Coordination does not necessarily lead to causality in its wake—and this holds even when the coordination at issue conjoins what is conscious and what is not. Even suppose (for the sake of discussion) that my thought processes always and invariably were in lock-step coordination with *earlier* brain processes (occurring a certain fraction of a second earlier). Even this does not put brain physiology into causal control. The fact that the front of a vehicle arrives first does not mean that the motor power cannot be provided by an engine at the rear.

Prospect 3. *Common Cause Antecedence*. Those experimental designs leave entirely open the prospect that there is an earlier conjointly coordinated brain-state *cum* (subconscious) mind-state condition that both produced the brain-state condition at issue in the "anticipation" and the mind-state condition that marks the conscious awareness of the outcome.

* * *

The point is that the Libet experiments do not bear just one single interpretation that is antithetical to freedom of the will, but remain indecisive in this regard by opening the door to other sorts of interpretation. Libet himself, however, described his findings as showing that "the volitional process is thereafter instituted unconsciously before the subject becomes aware of her will or resolution to perform the act."[15] For otherwise unexplainable reasons he sidelines the prospect of a volitional process that is concurrently instituted subconsciously before the subject's conscious recognition of deciding on act performance.

As he sees it, free decision is an illusion in these cases because the outcome is already an accomplished fact, settled in advance of the conscious awareness required for its eventual implementation. But this way of viewing the matter is predicated on the very questionable presumption that freedom always requires conscious deliberation, so that unconscious choices are never free. But if this idea is abandoned, and freedom is already present at the initial stage of his timeline, then the situation envisioned by Libet creates no problem for free will. Only the deeply problematic idea that free choices must always be made wittingly—that deliberative decision is the only mode of volitional freedom—can render the Libet findings antithetical to free will. Once one deploys the critical duality between subconscious awareness and thought and full consciousness thinking, the idea Libet's results allow a different construal.

After all, it does not stand in the way of their freedom that occurrences will often have physical anticipations. When I (freely) begin speaking I will (often as not) draw breath beforehand. When I begin writing I will (often as not) tighten my finger-hold on the pen. Even so, I may, when embarking on a deliberate action, put myself into a mind/brain issue-resolution mode beforehand. But in no such instance does that preparatory move impede the freedom that subsequent decision or action. It is not the precursor of a free action but a *part* of it.[16]

The crux of physio-psychological unfreedom would have to be not the *absence* of mind-corrective brain states, but their dispensability in the explanation of events. But this situation is something that is far removed from anything that has been experimentally evidentiated to date.

One recent writer speaks for numerous others in maintaining that "our best scientific theories have the consequence that factors beyond our control produce *all* the actions we perform."[17] But this sort of thing is a model of careless formulation. For one thing factors don't

produce occurrences, only other occurrences do. For another thing, if the objects at issue indeed are "the actions we perform" then how is their production possibly beyond our control? The very contention is self-contradictory. Presumably the writer means "the actions we ordinarily take ourselves to perform," but if so he might as well have said so. But now to the core: is what this author intends to say something that even remotely approximates to the truth? For example, one thing I take myself to perform freely is to write the very sentence I am now putting on paper. And this has a dual aspect, namely (1) the ink marks I am imposing upon the paper, and (2) the claims I am endeavoring to make in writing this English sentence. And now I ask, what is there in the theory-manifold of modern sciences at its best that conflicts with my claim regarding the aforementioned free performance? Where is the "factor" or "occurrence" lying outside the realm of my control that has impelled my sentence production? No question, the world is full of things that are beyond my control. But few and far between are the scientists who would maintain that the sentence I contribute to our conversation or the chocolates I select from that box you offer me are among them.

Notes

1. Honderich (1973), p. 189. However, this author emphatically declines to take a position on the issue of whether brain-state causes the mind-state (p. 190), and also passes the reverse idea over in discreet silence. But it is just this prospect—not so much of *causation* as of state-change *initiation*—that lies at the heart of the present deliberations.
2. Schlick (1962), Chapter 8.
3. On mind-brain interaction see the contribution of Jürgen Boeck in Henrich (1982), pp. 9–22.
4. Perhaps the most cogent recent attempt "to reinstate the spiritual self as the controller of the brain" is J. C. Eccles' book, *How the Self Controls Its Brain* (Berlin: Springer, 1994).
5. See Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, A803 = B831.
6. There is a vast number of fine books on the subject. A representative sampling includes Eccles (1994), Honderich (1990), and Watson (1982).
7. "Das Verhältnis der Seele zum Leib ist stets das einer Herrschaft," H. Lotze (1852), p. 289.
8. See Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, A803 = B831.
9. The reverse will not, of course, be the case.
10. Hobart/Miller (1934), p. 17.
11. Mill (1843) is one of the earliest works that is altogether sound on the issues of this paragraph.
12. What he himself is prepared to concede to agents is the prospect of injecting a veto between readiness inauguration and action inauguration.

13. On Libet issues see Swinburne III, pp. 108–112.
14. Even Libet's neurophysiological investigations can be interpreted as indicating that free actions can be inaugurated by decisions made subconsciously. (See Libet et al., 1983.)
15. Libet (2004), p. 224.
16. Libet leaves room for "veto decisions" between action inaugurating preparedness and the action itself. But the interval at issue seems too small to allow room for "second thoughts," and the entire process may well figure as one single (free) action.
17. G. D. Caruso (2012), p. 1.

10

Does Free Will Exist? Deliberations Pro and Con

Synopsis

(1) There is good reason to think that we humans do indeed have free will. And while there also are some counter-indications, they are very far from being conclusive. (2) Sensibly construed, the doctrine of free will is compatible with modern science. For there is (or need be) nothing supernatural or supranatural about free will. To be sure, while there is good reason to think that we possess freedom of the will as a generic capacity, the situation in any one particular *case can be unclear. (3) Like intelligence itself, free will—the capacity to govern one's action by one's thought—has to be seen as the product of evolutionary development. (4) And on balance the situation is that free will, properly understood, is a fact of life.*

1. On Evidentiating Free Will

There actually are two very different questions: (1) What is it to have free will? Just what would its realization consist in? What is being claimed in attributions of free will and what is at issue in the contrast between its presence and absence? and (2) Do we humans actually have a free will? Do we indeed possess this putative capacity? On the one side here is the issue of how free will is conceived of, and on the other, the question of its realization in the world's scheme of things. To this late point, the present discussion has focused primarily upon the first set of issues, with the second yet remaining substantially untouched. The time for addressing it has now come.

In the tradition of Laplace and LaMettrie, the psychologist B. F. Skinner made a valiant attempt over many years to render acceptable, if not palatable, the idea that we are not free, responsible agents who control their actions by means of thought.[1] But he found this to be a

hard sell,[2] as becomes readily understandable in contemplating two questions:

1. Given the option between seeing yourself as a free and responsible agent or not, which would you prefer?
2. What would you think of someone who, given the aforementioned option, would prefer the anti-libertarian alternative?

Once they understand the matter, people naturally incline to *think* of themselves as free agents, and free will is assuredly something we would like to have if we can get it. But can we reasonably lay claim to it?

On the present account, an action is quintessentially free when:

1. What the agent actually does is appropriately in line with what he is trying to do, where
2. What the agent is trying to do is appropriately in line with what he chooses to do, and
3. What the agent chooses to (try to) do is the result of deliberation conducted autonomously on his own account without undue influence from without.

Free action is, in consequence, a conception heavily freighted with fundamentally normative conceptions—to wit, *appropriate* alignment and *undue* external influences. The presence of these normative conditions unquestionably renders the concept into something rather subtle and complex. But this circumstance no more prevents that concept from actually having applications any more than it would do with any other subtle and complex concept.

Only when our actions are determined by occurrences entirely outside the range of our experience at large and detached from influence by our conscious and unconscious thought can free will be denied to us. Taking this position on an across-the-board basis, the rejection of free will is one of those philosophical doctrines—like solipsism or "life is but a dream" paranoia—from which it is not possible to dislodge someone by mere counter-argumentation.

Among the most elaborate recent investigations of free will is Ulrich Pothast's *Die Unzulänglichkeit der Freiheitsbeweise*.[3] However, this widely informed and painstaking study is developed on the basis of the decidedly problematic premise that the object of the enterprise is somehow to *demonstrate* the existence of free will, and not merely to *evidentiate* it. Unfortunately, however, the idea of *demonstrating* free decision makes about as much sense as that of *demonstrating* unselfish

actions. In both cases we are dealing with phenomena where plausible instances can indeed be adduced, but the complexity of things is such that categorical guarantees cannot be issued.

As medieval philosophers such as Duns Scotus already noted, our claims to free will must rest on experience: the will's freedom is something one cannot demonstrate by reasoning abstractly from general principles. Moreover, Immanuel Kant also argued plausibly that freedom of the will is *transcendental* in being such that observationally geared inquiry cannot possibly settle the question of its reality one way or the other.[4] So how can one get there from here?

In the end, the question "Do people have free will?" is not a straightforwardly observational issue such as "Do roses have petals?" Like the quark, free will is not an observable phenomenon. Its endorsement will have to be a matter of "inference to the best explanatory systematization" over a very extensive range of fact. A more promising approach would be one that asks: Can we best make overall sense of the observable phenomena by supposing or postulating freedom of the will in humans?

So—what kind of substantiating evidence for freedom of the will could there possibly be? Given that straightforward observation cannot resolve matters for us, the only empirical substantiation of free will that could actually be available to us is something rather more tentative and indirect, consisting in such considerations as the following:

(1) *The presumptive evidence afforded by the experiential phenomenology of deliberation in matters of choice and decision*. Here, the reality of it is that we humans—or at any rate most of us—have a virtually irrepressible sense of being in charge of what we decide. We have difficulty persuading ourselves that in making up our own minds about alternatives we are at the mercy of forces and agencies beyond the reach of our control. That we are free in various situations to make our choice of acting conformably to our wishes—to make one's fingers move when one so chooses—appears to be among the most commonplace of human experiences, as is the fact that one can often shift the focus of one's attention at will when awake (though not when asleep and dreaming).

(2) *The presumptive evidence afforded by the virtually irresistible inclination to see others as morally, ethically, and normatively responsible agents who are potentially capable of autonomous choice and decision*. We standardly regard other people as free and responsible agents and view what people do to us and to one another in a light very different from that of the design of an animal or a machine.

(3) *The presumptive evidence afforded by the common practice of reasoning with people in matters of choice and decision.* The general course of human expe-

rience has induced in us a strong inclination to acknowledge the potential rationality of others—of their thought being in charge here in ways that can be affected by materials we put at their disposal for consideration in these deliberations. Throughout our dealings with people we are strongly inclined to see them too as intelligent agents whose thoughts put them in charge of what they choose and decide.[5] And this points also to—

(4) *The presumptive evidence afforded by our view of ourselves and our species as rational and morally responsible agents*. Free agency is an integral constituent of our self-perception as a special sort of being who acts not only by reflex, programming, or conditioning, but occasionally—and indeed often—by free choice. And the fact of it is that we standardly credit people with being free agents with responsibility for what they do. Moreover, free will is pivotal not just for *rationality* (the guidance of reason) but also *morality*—seeing that, as Kant already stressed, moral responsibility is inextricably interconnected with freedom of the will.

Granted, f*eeling* sure of one's freedom is no secure indicator for *being* free. After all, this conviction or feeling that we are free to act—what German philosophers call *Freiheitsgefühl*—does not decisively prove anything since feelings can sometimes be misleading or illusionary.[6] And so, are we ever really in control? How can you be sure that *you* can move your arm? You just know! There really is no "How to be sure?" about it, any more than in myriad other cases. (How do you know that you actually know what "know" means?) If you are genuinely unsure about this sort of thing, you are in deep trouble—trouble so deep that there is little that people can do by communicative means to lift you out of it. Granted, there will be problems about the *limits* of our control. (Just *how long* can we hold our breath?) But that you can *try* to do so for a while is something that you "just know." The prospect of such a choice in straightforward cases is one of those facts that is no less clear than any substantiating considerations that could possibly be brought forth to evidentiate it. In the end, there is no reason to reject our sense of freedom as an *evidential* indicator that is less qualified to indicate fact than the feeling that we are unwell provides us an indication of illness. Feelings may not prove, but they can evidentiate.

Indecisive though they are, those evidential indications provide for a dialectic of the following structure:

> The general tenor of everyday experience leads people to think of themselves as free agents who control their decisions and actions. In the face of the pro presumption that this circumstance establishes, it will take a strong argument to the contrary to defeat it. But the flaws and fallacies one encounters throughout the range of the standard determinist arguments serve to indicate that the opposing con case simply lacks the requisite strength to prevail.

Various other perspectives can also be brought to bear. Thus, suppose an alien spaceship landed and we could establish communication with the little green men that emerge. They seem intelligent and they certainly qualify as *agents* since they apparently built and navigated that spacecraft. But are they really *free* agents or mere *automata* of some sophisticated sort? How could we possibly tell? What sort of things could they possibly do that would convince us? What actual evidence of volitional freedom could they offer us—deliberation, hesitation, consultation, persuasion? And what else? What more could one reasonably ask for? In the circumstances we would have no good reason to abstain from crediting them with free will. As one reflects on this, one is led to the realization that everything they could possibly do in this line is something that we can observe our fellow humans actually doing. And so why should what holds for *their* goose not hold for *our* gander as well?

In the end, then, the evidentiation of free will comes down to a question of proportion—of weighing the probative weight of the considerations that speak in favor in relation to the evidence that there possibly could be. And on this basis it would appear that all the evidence for human freedom that we could possibly have—all that we could *reasonably* ask for—is actually there.

And so, if the reader should ask: "Do I ever really do anything freely?" a plausible replay could well run: "Yes, you do, dear reader—and indeed you are doing so even now." For in reading this sentence you are (1) doing something, (2) doing this in line with your wishes (albeit not necessity in line with your *preferences*), (3) doing this when you could (if you so wished) be doing something else, and finally (4) acting on motives formed autonomously on your own, rather that under the influence of externally impersonal constraints. And it is just exactly the combination of these considerations that determines the status of your actions as an instance of free will, with metaphysical freedom assumed by (1) – (3) and moral freedom added by (4).

It is virtually impossible to think of an appropriately truth-engendering filler for completing the formula

> If our will is indeed free, then we could reasonably expect to find that. . . .

that would, nevertheless, fail to realize the truth of

> We do actually find that. . . .

All of the evidence that could *possibly* be available to speak on behalf of our will's being free is in fact there. The question "What more could you possibly want?" should effectively settle the issue.

But, of course, one must consider the other side as well.

2. Is Free Will Unscientific?

Is the doctrine of free will not inherently unscientific? Does modern science not counterevidentiate it? And, in particular, how in the present age can you discuss free will without bringing neuroscience into it?

Easily! Whether acts of free will do or do not occur is no more an issue of neuroscience than whether headaches do or do not occur. For the question of the *existence* of headaches is not a fact of neuroscience at all. The discipline can tell us *how* headaches occur—that is, it can elaborate in detail what goes on in our brains when we have them. (And for practical purposes we are generally—even if illogically—minded to accept this *how* as also addressing the question *why*.) But neuroscience is certainly not required for telling us *that* we have them—and actually is not really in a position to address the matter. And the situation is much the same with free will. That our will is free (if free it is)—that we actually sometimes make choices and decisions in the manner that free will theory maintains—is not something on which the teaching of neuroscience as such has much bearing. On the other hand, what it is that goes on in our brains when those putatively free decisions are being made is certainly something on which neuroscience could unquestionably have a lot to offer. But—and this is the key point—the issue of the *existence* of free choices and decisions is something that will have to be decided first—on grounds quite apart from the operations of neuroscience. THAT we suffer headaches or think logically or decide freely are all matters that have to be resolved on a basis prior to and independently of the teachings of neuroscience about what sorts of physico-denial processes go on in the brain WHEN we have experiences of this sort. Were the former issues not addressed first and independently, the latter could not arise.

Free will doubters often claim that it is something mysterious and supra-natural, requiring a suspension of disbelief regarding the standard view of natural occurrence subject to the Principle of Causality. As one recent writer puts it:

> Agent causation is a frankly mysterious doctrine, positing something unparalleled by anything we discover in the causal processes of chemical reactionism, nuclear fission and fusion, magnetic attraction, hurricanes, volcanos, or such biological processes as metabolism,

> growth, immune reactions, and photosynthesis. Is there such a thing? When libertarians insist that there must be, they [build upon sand].[7]

But this sort of complaint is deeply problematic. After all, the fact that a thing is different from others is no obstacle to its intelligibility. Free will, properly regarded, hinges on the capacity of the mind to seize the initiative in effecting changes in the developmental course of mind-brain coordinated occurrence. And this is something that certainly need not be seen as mysterious or supranatural. After all, with the development of minds upon the world stage in the course of evolution, various capacities and capabilities come upon the scene emergently, adding new sorts of operations to the repertoire of mammalian capacities—remembering past occurrences, for example, or imagining future ones. And one of these developmental innovations is the capacity of the mind to take the initiative in effecting change in the setting of mind from coordinate developments. This phenomenon is sufficiently common in experience that there need be nothing mysterious or supra-natural about it.

Modern scientism—though not necessarily modern *science*—looks on man as a leaf blown about hither and thither by the winds of nature's causality. But this is a decidedly questionable view as long as that leaf possesses some power of self-propulsion. The long and short of it is that nothing in a sensible scientific naturalism need be seen as standing in the way of free agency of the agent-in-charge variety, seeing that those personal operations and functionings of ours are nowise imposed on us from without by machinations beyond the reach of our own (at least partial) control.

And in any event, our knowledge of neural mechanics, brain chemistry, evolutionary psychology, developmental psychology, and the rest of present-day science does little, if anything, to establish that human decisions are engendered by processes external to the individual at issue—imposed upon her thought by forces outside her own mind's operation. The mechanics of brain functioning no more impose an external constraint on our thought and deliberation than the mechanics of a typewriter impose an external constraint upon the message of the texts that it produces. But this aspect of the issue has already been addressed in detail.

To be sure, ever since the heyday of Newtonian physics various writers have argued that the *causal*—or, in the era of relativistic physics, *temporal*—structure of the physical universe precludes free agency

by rendering the physical developments of the distant future lawfully encompassed in those of the distant past. But all such contentions suffer a common defect in failing to note that in shifting the discussion from issues of physics to issues of human behaviour we effectively change the subject. The phenomena with which natural science deals do not address the specifics of human activity. The principles of natural science—however informative—cannot settle what you will be reading in the first page of tomorrow's newspaper.

In moving from fundamental physics to biology or macroeconomics we shift the subject of interrogative concern to where deliberations of the former sort can no more address issues of the latter than mammalian biology can tell you which wildebeest the flock will mate with or human psychology can tell you which words a letter writer will put on the paper before him.

The issues of a wider domain do, of course, circumscribe those of a narrower one. Medicine must conform to biology, literature to linguistics, bridge-building to material science. And similarly our behavioral actions must conform to biophysics. But to think that the laws of the wider domain determine those of the narrower—that with greater specificity there do not arise entirely new issues that the wider domain does not even begin to address, issues with a characteristic phenomenology of their own—would be not just wrong but foolish.

Some theorists see quantum mechanics (QM) as having an intimate bearing on the question of free will. But this is very problematic. After all, free will relates to complex molar systems on the order of human beings, while QM addresses nature at a very different level of scale and complexity. And it holds that at this inaccessible micro level, there are in nature occurrences that fail to be determined by the prior constitution of things. And this does not really touch the free will problem save at one point. For it does mean that the free will doctrine cannot simply be rejected on the score of rejecting all-determinative nature causality.

We are told that the existence of free decisions is thrown into doubt by the fact that electromagnetic brain stimulation can produce in an agent what someone ordinarily would consider to be a free decision. To this end, however, all that fancy gadgetry is not really needed. Pavlovian conditioning has ago produced the same effects on a low-tech basis; or again, going to bed is generally seen as the product of free decision, but it too can be engendered manipulatively by ingesting a soporific substance. What ordinarily looks to be free decision can in various ways be engendered manipulatively in various sorts of conditions. But

that, of course, has no bearing on whether or not they occur in other, more normal conditions and circumstances. Will determinism no more invalidates freedom of the will than optical illusion can invalidate the informativeness of sight.

There are, in fact, substantial problems with each of the main reasons recently advanced for the idea that contemporary psychology and neuroscience counterindicate freedom of the will. Let us consider some of them:

- People are generally predictable, and as one gets to know more about them, one can predict with great confidence how they will make their decisions and choices.

  Response: The predictability at issue is statistical and probabilistic, and freedom is incompatible only with agent-external predetermination and not with probabilistic predictability. Moreover, such prediction—be it probabilistic or not—is based on an agent's own motivational make-up and such agent-correlative motivation-grounded predictability is entirely consistent with freedom of the will.

- Purported instances of free agency often turn out to be explicable on the basis of natural causality. Various psychological experiments show people will misattribute certain of their decisions to acts of free will,[8] mistakenly crediting to deliberation what is the product of conditioning, hypnosis, or other physical or psychological manipulation.[9] Thus, when a finger is moved by physical manipulation (e.g., when an iron ring is attached to a magnet), the agent may mistake the resultant movement for free.[10]

  Response: Mistakes about free will do not establish its nonexistence. Trial lawyers and entertainment magicians have long noted that people can be self-deluded about what they see. But this does not refute the general reliability of vision and invalidate sight as a source of frequently (or even predominantly) correct information. And as elementary logic shows, even if you pile up to the height of Mt. Everest instances where humans do not act freely, this fails to show that they will not *sometimes* do so. That something does not happen "often" or "mostly" or even "almost always" cannot invalidate the idea that it *sometimes* does.

- Neuroscientists have recently performed experiments to show that various modes of brain stimulation will exert influence upon the outcomes of deliberate choice, leaving the agent with illusions about the extent to which he is in control.[11] And in a series of experiments reprinted in 1990, K. Ammon and S. C. Gandieva found that selective magnetic stimulation of the hemispheres of the brain could strongly influence which hand people decided—freely as they saw it—to move.[12]

  Response: All of those demonstrations indicating that brain-causality sometimes dominates thought-motivation do nothing to show that the reverse is not sometimes—or indeed often—the case.

- Experiments regarding the timing of act-engendering brain activity in relation to the experience of decision have suggested that people sometimes perform actions inaugurated antecedently to the time they take themselves to have decided upon them. In these experiments there are neurological situations of motion-motivation a minute fraction of a second before the subject indicates the outset of a conscious desire to perform the movement.[13]

  Response: There is nothing in the nature of these experiments to preclude the plausible prospect that the agents had arrived at a (free) decision at the subconscious level before they became aware of it.

- Even as agents can be deluded and mistaken about the actions they do or do not perform, as in the case of phantom limbs, so they can be deluded and mistaken about the voluntariness of their doings, and surmise phantom volitions for formal investments.[14]

  Response: This objection surely cuts very little ice. There is, after all, very little that we cannot possibly be mistaken about.

- We understand how biophysical processes can cause actions. But how mind (thought) can influence matter (action)—as free agency would require—is something mysterious and unscientific.

  Response: A failure to understand how something works does not remove it from the realm of reality. (Who understands hypnosis, acupuncture, placebos, or autosuggestion?) To maintain that a phenomenon is annihilated by a lack of understanding regarding its causal origin is a very strange theory as to how thought can control reality.

- Some psychological experiments indicate that our deliberate decisions are sometimes influenced by reason of extraneous considerations—annoyed people make less generous decisions, people in turbulent environments make less benevolent decisions.[15] Their decisions appear to be determined—or at least strongly influenced—by reason-irrelevant considerations.

  Response: Such aberrations do not make for a general rule. Moreover, even if we count these irrational influences as modes of undue influence, this still leaves claims to metaphysical freedom unaffected and goes no further than to countervail against moral freedom.

Overall, one consideration is paramount: Pretty well anything we humans do can be mismanaged. We can make mistakes in computation, misremember events, succumb to optical illusions, and feel pain in missing limbs. And similarly we can be mistaken in judgments of freedom and err in deeming free various things done under the influence of hypnosis, conditioning, or the like. But in no sphere does the fact that we are *sometimes* mistaken carry over to *systemic* erroneousness. The possession of a capacity to will freely is not annihilated by the fact that we sometimes make mistakes in the matter. Here, as elsewhere, generalizing from tendentiously preselected instances is a very questionable practice.[16]

In the end, then, if scientific inquiry is indeed to show that acts of free will do not exist, it must establish that, however closely mind activity and brain activity may be coordinated, one cannot plausibly maintain that that former is at least sometimes the independently controlling factor in the interaction process. (Even as the advocate of free will must be in a position to argue that it sometimes is.) In this regard each side confronts a complex and difficult hurdle, and at this time the jury is still out on which rival can claim the palm of victory. Much remains to be done, especially since some clarification needs to be provided before experiential observation can possibly prove productive.

3. Free-Will Naturalism and Evolution

In principle, free will—and quintessentially choice issuing from the action-oriented deliberation of intelligent agents by their beliefs and goals—is no more supernatural than is intelligence itself, and agent-managed choice is no more extraordinary than agent-managed

belief. There is every reason to take the stance of an evolutionary naturalism with regard to both: intelligence itself and its expression via free will. The guidance of action by understanding via our beliefs and goals—rather than by an unthinking automaticity of some sort—has immense selectionistic advantages in the evolutionary scheme of things, and the deliberative choice with a view to the circumstances of the future is part and parcel to this. Free will is not at odds with scientific naturalism, but should be seen—like intelligence itself—as being part and parcel of an evolutionary perspective. The exercise of free will is an evolved talent—in this regard somewhat akin to the capacity to do mental arithmetic.

To be sure, one often hears it said that *"the very idea of free will is antithetical to science because free will is something occult that cannot possibly be scientifically naturalized."* But it is—or should be—hard to work up much sympathy for this objection as it figures such contentions as that "belief in free will presumes a special and puzzling separation [of humans] from the natural world."[17] Here one can certainly accept that *special*, seeing that free will instances intelligence and that intelligence occupies a rather special place in the world. But that free agency would constitute a *puzzling* separation from nature is itself a rather puzzling claim. Surely any sensible exponent of free will could (and should) be happy to see it as part of the natural course of things. For if free will exists—if homo sapiens can indeed make free choices and decisions—then this should ideally be part of the natural order. And in fact if we indeed are free, then this has to be so for roughly the same reason that we are intelligent—that is, because in the evolution of our species things turned out that way.

The objection at issue is thus problematic in that it rests on the inappropriate presupposition that free will has to be something super- or preternatural. The mind-engendered decisions of intelligent agents on the basis of motivational deliberation are themselves a mode of causal determination of a kind characteristic of the *modus operandi* of such beings. Deliberative choosing and deciding must be as much a capacity developed through evolutionary emergence as is speaking or imagining possibilities. If free will there is, it will and can be an aspect of how naturally evolved beings operate on nature's stage.

The elaborate present-day studies of brain physiology certainly do not invalidate free will. Consider what happens when you look at a page in Mandarin Chinese and when a Chinese mandarin does so. You both "see" the same thing, but yet not. You see squiggles; he sees

ideas. Only when physical processes impinge upon a duly prepared mind—a mind duly schooled for thinking—is there an apprehension of meaning and a basis for understanding. The brain processes may be essential to thought but thought goes above and beyond. To be sure, brain physiology is always connected with thought. But in matters of understanding the mind is the crucial player in its own right, and in matters of choice and decision it is thought that is the ultimate controller of outcomes. Brain and mind may work in lock-step coordination, but as with a teeter-totter sometimes the one side is the agent and the other the responder, and sometimes the reverse. (The situation is akin to that of free and dependent variables in physics.)

These deliberations point to a further probatively significant point, namely *the patent utility of free will as an evolutionary resource*. For what lies at the heart and core of free will is up-to-the-last-moment thought-control by a rational agent of his deliberation-produced choices and decision in the light of his ongoingly updated information and evaluation. To see that such a capacity is of advantage in matters of survival is surely not a matter of rocket-science. And so, the explanatory rationale for this innovation would be substantially the same as that for any other sort of evolution-emergent capability, namely that it contributes profitability to the business of natural selection.

It is, clearly, an efficient and effective way for an intelligent agent to function successfully in a complex environment for it to be equipped with a free will, seeing that this will give the agent the power to adjust his decisions and choices to the detail of conditions as he discerns them to be up to the moment of resolution. Only such an arrangement puts the agent into an optimal position to provide for his then-operative needs and wants, affording a flexible, ongoingly updated harmonization of information and the satisfaction of needs and desires. After all, if *homo sapiens* indeed has a free will, he has surely come to have it because evolution put it there for his advantage.

In the final analysis, the realization of free will in (some of) this world's creatures will hinge on its status of an instrumentality of survival advantage. There are, of course, many different ways for a creature to shape its activities on the world stage so as to meet its needs and wants: sheer biochemical automatism, pure instinct, and even random groping. But intelligently managed free agency—the ongoingly monitored orientation of behavior to desire satisfaction

via thought based on information secured through inquiry—is also one of these. And experience and theory alike indicate that only the flexibility of free decision and choice can most efficiently deliver the goods here.

The ancient Greeks divided reality into the works of nature (*phusis*) and the contrivances of man (*nomos*). And this was a wise step, for with the developmental emergence of intelligent beings in the world all sorts of new things came into existence. For beings capable of intelligence-guided agency will be capable of:

- symbol use (and thus linguistic communication)
- conjecture and hypothesis entertainment (and thus reasoning and mathematics)
- value commitment (and thus romantic love)
- rule adoption (and thus social interaction with rights and obligations and duties)

And prominent among these there is also over control resource for the exercise of:

- reasoned choice (free will)

Deliberative choice is basic to our being what we are—even in matters of cognition in contrast to overt action, since knowing something involves accepting it as true and rejecting its denial as false. Evaluation, the discrimination of positive and negative, plus and minus, is crucial here—and pervasive as well, since it can appertain both to the doings and eventuations of nature (good/bad, pleasant/unpleasant, true/false) and the doings and actions of man (right/wrong, correct/incorrect, appropriate/inappropriate). And such opposites are always the poles of an axis stretching between them as matters of degree, be it in matters of nature (*phusis*) or of the machinations of man (*nomos*). And just here, of course, "the will" enters in, since the opportunities for appropriate or inappropriate proceedings, for good and bad action always arise here, and the will is free to choose, be it wisely and properly or not. Freedom is freedom to do things that are foolish, ill-advised, counterproductive.

Our capacity for rational choice—the ability not only to choose but to do so on the basis of mind-contemplated reasons—is what distinguishes man from the lower animals on this planet. Subhuman creatures can act. And they can act for good or ill. But they cannot act wisely or unwisely since they do not act rationally (i.e., for deliberative reasons) because the evaluative dimension of good versus bad is

missing. Acts of will—choices and decisions—are eventuations of a special sort produced in, by, and for minds. They are a critical part of what developed minds do as they emerge within nature in the wake of evolution's evolving complexity. It is thus only sensible to view free will, along with the emergence of intelligence, as one of evolution's crowning glories. For the reality of it is that free agency is an optimally useful evolutionary resource for intelligent agents, and if this arrangement did not already exist in the world, evolutionary pressures would militate for its emergence.

The thought control of action-guiding choice is the crux of free will. And free agency is therefore inherently bound up with rationality, and in specific terms (1) cognitive rationality calls for the control of belief by thought, and (2) practical rationality calls for the contrast of action by belief. Put together, these two considerations mean that with the development of rational creatures there will be beings who can control action by thought. But just exactly this idea—that with the evolution of intelligent agents upon the world's stage there will be creatures that are able to control their actions by means of thought—is the heart and core of the doctrine of free will. To deny the reality of free will is effectively to deny the evolutionary emergence of intelligent agents.

In principle, a perfectly "naturalistic" case can be made on behalf of the freedom of the will through evolutionary considerations. To be sure, Charles Darwin himself thought that he had to negate free will to make room for the evolution of mind. But here he was being uncharacteristically near-sighted. For there is no good reason to refrain from acknowledging rather than being an impediment to survival, that free will, like intelligence itself, affords a significant survival advantage. Rather than being a roadblock to evolution, freedom of the will should be regarded as one of its greatest achievements. This aspect of the matter is regrettably seldom heeded, but is nevertheless absolutely central to the case for free will.[18]

The capacity for rational choice—the ability not only to choose but to do so on the basis of reasons—is what distinguishes man from the lower animals on this planet. Subhuman creatures can act. And they can act for good or ill. But they cannot act wisely or unwisely since they do not act rationally (i.e., for deliberative reasons) because the evaluative dimension of good versus bad is missing.

The dialectical intertwining of ideas along these conceptual lines thus lies at the basis of the conception of human freedom. Acts of will—choices and decisions—are eventuations of a special sort produced in,

by, and for minds. They are a critical part of what developed minds do as they emerge within nature in the wake of evolution's evolving complexity. It is thus only sensible to view free will, along with the emergence of intelligence, as one of evolution's crowning glories. For the reality of it is that free agency is an optimally useful evolutionary resource for intelligent agents, and if this arrangement did not already exist in the world, evolutionary pressures would militate for its emergence.

The thought control of action is the crux of free will. And free agency is therefore inherently bound up with the conviction of rationality. And two considerations are crucial here: (1) cognitive rationality calls for the control of belief by thought, and (2) practical rationality calls for the contrast of action by belief. Put together, these two considerations mean that with the development of rational creatures there will be beings who can control action by thought. But just exactly this idea—that with the evolution of intelligent agents upon the world's stage there will be creatures that are able to control their actions by means of thought—is the heart and core of the doctrine of free will. To deny the reality of free will is effectively to deny the evolutionary emergence of intelligent agents. Accordingly, a perfectly "naturalistic" case can be made on behalf of the freedom of the will through evolutionary considerations. To be sure, Charles Darwin thought that he had to negate free will to make room for the evolution of mind. But here he was being uncharacteristically near-sighted. For there is no good reason to refrain from acknowledging that, rather than being an impediment to survival, free will, like intelligence itself, affords a significant advantage, and rather than being a roadblock to evolution should be regarded as one of its greatest achievements. This aspect of the matter is regrettably seldom heeded, but is nevertheless critically important to the case for free will.

4. Conclusion

The principal subdivisions of philosophy are logic, metaphysics, epistemology, and ethics. And the philosophy of free will ramifies into all four of these regions. For overall, the issue of free will has four principal facets or dimensions:

- *Conceptual*: What is it?
- *Metaphysical*: How does it fit into the larger scheme of things?
- *Evidential*: Is it for real? Do we actually have it? And if so—
- *Ethical* and *Theological*: What are its implications for our self-understanding and for our conduct?

Only the last of these issues yet remains to be addressed here, and the situation here is rather straightforward in its broad outlines.

The core idea of freedom of the will is that man as a rational agent is a being for whom issues of decision—those of belief-acceptance included—can and should be resolved on the basis of reflective thought and is not a matter of an efficient causality that somehow bypasses the motivationally guided deliberations of the individual. The doctrine of free will accordingly offers us opportunities for self-constitution in opening the prospect that we humans can and should see ourselves as rational agents who exercise individual control in matters of decision and choice. Such an approach has it that in substantial measure we become the individuals we are on the basis of the choices and decisions that we make.

The question of whether or not the world we live in actually is a home for free agents remains a debatable issue in the unavailable absence of categorical demonstration one way or the other. But what is reasonably clear is that this world's discernable *modus operandi* does nothing to rule out this prospect, and moreover that reflective humans are in general not only inclined to think so but generally feel an obligation to do so.

More or less by definition, intelligent rational agents are beings who can and do make choices and decisions by consulting their wants and wishes in the light of the existing conditions as best they discern them. To see our fellow humans in this light as potentially intelligent and responsible agents may on occasion be giving them more credit than is their due. But to refuse to see them so—always and everywhere—is to slam the door on common sense and to refuse entry to what Abraham Lincoln called "the better angels of our nature."

And just here the ethical landscape comes into view. For among these choices and decisions there is the fundamentalism of whether or not to see ourselves as free and responsible agents. And we are certainly well-advised to see ourselves as such as long as the opportunity to do so is open—that is, as long as no conclusive counterevidentiation or counterargumentation stands in the way. The issue is basically one of what we choose to make of ourselves. And ultimately, you pay your money and take your choice. We confront what William James characterized as the "momentous option" of deciding how we propose to look at ourselves—and thereby what we decide to make of ourselves. And when we choose to see ourselves as free agents, then—exactly as James urged—the prime exercise of the freedom we claim for ourselves is to

believe in the reality of the freedom of the will. Regarding ourselves as free agents is one of the things we should do simply because we can.

The idea that free will is self-engendered—that the will's freedom is self-created as a prime and primordial product of the exercise of free will itself—was a lynch-pin of Hegel's philosophy.[19] And he accordingly contrasted *natural history,* whose unfolding is a matter of causal necessity, with *history proper*, human history, whose evolution unfolds ongoing development of the consciously self-determined exercise of free will. For Hegel, history proper was thus a "progress of the consciousness of freedom."[20] If this be madness, there is much of method in it.

Does this aspect of the matter make the question of free will into a theological issue?

It ought to be more readily recognized than seems to be the case that endorsing free will does not require any sort of theological precommitments. All the same, a humane theology will unquestionably want to endorse freedom of the will, even though a "God predetermines all" version of theism may hesitate to do so. For if a benign God indeed created a universe with animals, he will want to make sure that they thrive there and not just barely survive. And if he created intelligent beings, he will want to make sure that they have free will for effective life-management. After all, one cannot but think that what is advantageous for intelligent creatures will rank high in the value-scheme of a benign creator. And so, a ready transit from theology to free will is indeed there. But the reverse is emphatically not the case. The doctrine of free will can be sustained as a naturalistic prospect without any theological presumptions or precommitments. So while there is good reason for theists to support free will, there is no compelling reason why atheists need feel themselves compelled to reject it.

But is free will really worth wanting?[21] This, of course, depends crucially on how "freedom of the will" is to be understood. And as here conceived, moral freedom is a matter of the up-to-the-last-moment thought control by an agent of his choices and decisions in the light of this agent's autonomously realized information and motivation. It does not take rocket science to figure out that this sort of thing is a pretty significant asset and represents something that any sensible agent would ardently desire.

It is interesting in a rather ironic way that when the matter of free will is posed as an issue whose resolution is to be secured on the basis of rational deliberation with respect to evidence and reasons, this approach to the issue already comes too late. For even to seek reasons for or against the freedom of the will is *already* to presume in ourselves

a will free to effect decisions in matters of deliberations. Undertaking such an inquiry only makes sense in the context of the assumption that acceptance or rejection of the contention at issue is a free option that can and should be settled through thought on the basis of reasons—that resolving the matter by weighing considerations pro and con is an available prospect, itself freed from predetermination by forces or factors outside the range of our autonomously conducted deliberations.

The considerations set out in this book have followed a rather tortuous road through many distinctions and caveats. And its affirmative answer to the question of our having free will has laid no claim to the status of a categorical proof. The upshot may be stated as follows: given a sensible understanding of what free will is and what it requires, there are good reasons to accept its reality and cogent reasons for rejecting the traditional counterarguments and objections.

And so, a final judgment would run somewhat as follows. Free decision and action are not terms of art in science: they are conceptions that play a significant role in everyday discourse and to some extent in more technical discussions of moral and legal theory and practice. But there is nothing in our scientific identify—be it in physical or in psychological contexts—that is irreconcilable with the claims we are making about free will in this other context, nor yet about the attribution of this conception in particular episodes. If the question is "Can free will be reconciled with our best understanding of the ways of the world," then the best available answer would seem to be an emphatic YES!

Such an upshot falls short of any knock-down demonstration and may well leave its friends, the partisans of free will, less than enthusiastically content. But in view of the massive history of the controversy, it would be seriously unrealistic to expect more. In such matters we do well to be content with the best we can get, mindful of Cicero's wise dictum: "It is absurd to ask for what one cannot possibly obtain" (*Est ridiculum quaerere quae habere non possumus*).[22]

Notes

1. Skinner (1971).
2. See the critique in Wolf (1987).
3. Pothost (1980).
4. See also Ernst Haeckel, *Die Welträtsel* (Leipzig: A. Kröner, 1899).
5. The first three points are bound up with seeing *homo sapiens* as a species of agents, evaluators, and deliberators, as already stressed in Reid (1785).
6. Weatherford (1991), p. 127.

7. Dennett (1984), p. 120.
8. See Wegner (2002).
9. This holds in particular with the experiments of Delgado (1969) and Gazzaniga (1992).
10. See Basil-Neto (1992).
11. See Basil-Neto (1992), Delgado (1969), and Gazzaniga (1992).
12. K. Ammon and S. C. Gandevia, "Transcendental Magnetic Stimulation Can Influence the Selection for Motor Programmes," *Journal of Neurology, Neurosurgery, and Psychiatry,* vol. 53 (1990), pp. 705–707.
13. See Libet (1985), as well as the studies by Haggard, Frith, and Lau. Benjamin Libet was the pioneer here who set the fox among the pigeons, showing that unconscious brain activity preceded his subject's conscious decisions to flick their wrist half a second before they consciously decided to move. And in a series of related experiments reported in 1999, P. Haggard and M. Eimer found that left and right hemisphere brain activity differentially prefigured their subjects' decision which hand to move. Again, subconscious brain/thought processes apparently prefigure the conscious decisions involved.

    There seems to be reason to think that just as fully conscious free decisions can be evoked by various physical stimuli (such as someone's telling the subject to "raise your right hand," so various unwittingly received physical stimuli (such as brain magnetization) can influence a person's act-preceding "unconscious deliberations."
14. See Gazzaniga (1992).
15. See Wegener (2002).
16. But nevertheless fashionable. See, for example, Wegner (2002).
17. Weatherford (1991), p. 125.
18. This essay originated in a Luncheon Lecture to the Center for Philosophy of Science at the University of Pittsburgh in the autumn of 2009.
19. *Philosophy of Right*, § 27. (See *Sämtliche Werke*, Volume VIII, p. 62.)
20. "Fortschritt im Selbstbewusstsein der Freiheit," *Philosophy of History* in *Sämtliche Werke*, Volume IX, p. 24.
21. This question was put on the agenda in Dennett (1984). It is also addressed in Wolf (1987) (pp. 59–60), Frankfurt (1988) (pp. 21–23), and (1969) (pp. 98–51). It is sometimes said that if determinism were true, there would be no sense whatsoever in deliberating. But this is problematic in confusing determinism with fatalism. After all, the determinist can have us be determined to deliberate further, taking the line that deliberation figures as a component part of what it takes to reach that deterministically decided result. And so, people's espousal of free will is altogether compatible with determinism—so that accepting this is something they are predetermined to do.
22. *Pro Archia*, 10.

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